THREE LITTLE WOMEN'S SUCCESS

By GABRIELLE E. JACKSON

From your
Father.

"You *Are* My Eyes And My Very Soul!"

THREE LITTLE WOMEN SERIES

THREE LITTLE WOMEN'S SUCCESS

A STORY FOR GIRLS

—By—

GABRIELLE E. JACKSON

Author of
"The Joy of Piney Hill," "Wee Winkles,"
"Sunlight and Shadow," "By Love's
Sweet Rule," Etc.

Illustrated

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TO DOROTHY

A loyal, lovable lassie,
A trusted and true little friend.

G. E. J.

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THREE LITTLE WOMEN'S SUCCESS.

CHAPTER I.

After Three Years.

October had come to Riveredge. This fact meant more than the five words usually imply, for to few spots did October show such a gracious presence as she did to this pretty town. Beautiful at all seasons, even in its wintry dress of gleaming snow, in its autumn gorgeousness, Riveredge was entirely irresistible. In summer the town drowsed, for during July and August many of its inhabitants took a holiday and journeyed thither and yonder; in the autumn it wakened to the busy bustle of active life and its preparations for the drawing together of all who dwelt therein, and spring was the time when it did its renovating, its housecleaning, its decorating, but October's

crisp westerly winds blowing across the broad expanses of the river set blood stirring, made pulses throb many beats quicker, and caused even strangers to smile and nod to one another as they passed along the streets. Friends called gayly: "Isn't the air delicious? Doesn't it make you want to prance like a colt?"

There was one individual in Riveredge whom it so affected, anyway. The fact that nearly three years have slipped by since we last witnessed any of her prancings has not lessened her propensity to do so, for with nearly fourteen years numbered off upon her life's calendar Jean Carruth is as much of a romp as ever, full of impulses as she was upon the day she rescued old Baltie; as she was when she so valiantly defended her property and her rights against the hoodlums of McKimm's Hollow. The three years have brought about many changes, it is true, but Jean Carruth will remain Jean Carruth to the end of the story. She has grown like a weed,

to be sure, and seems to be nearly all long arms and legs with a body like a hazel wand—pliable and vigorous, with powers of endurance far beyond its indications. A casual observer might think her less strong than she is, but in reality she is "soun' as a dollar and de cause ob mo' trebbilation dan a million ob 'em could be," insisted old Mammy. And Mammy was pretty well qualified to judge, having had charge of that young person since she drew her first breath in the world. Mammy still lived and flourished as Mammy Blairsdale-Devon. Nothing could induce her to drop the Blairsdale. Hadyn Stuyvesant had quite conclusively, though unwittingly, settled that point when he presented the superb sign, with its gleaming gold letters, to the newly opened lunch counter in the Arcade. Mrs. Carruth tried to persuade Mammy to take the name of her lately restored spouse, and be known thenceforth as Mrs. Charles Devon; but Mammy had scornfully stammered: "D-d-drap de Blairsdale? Never! I was borned

a Blairsdale, lived a Blairsdale eighteen year befo' I hooked on de Devon, an' den hatter onhook it inside of fo' months; den I lived fo'ty-seben years wid de Blairsdale name befo' I foun' out dat I had claim ter any odder. So what fo' I drap it now? Dey ain't no name kin leave it behine as I knows on. Devon's a good one, I knows, and down yonder where we-all was borned at it do stan' high for a fac', but it cyant rare up its head like de Blairsdale name kin. No, sir! Devon can hook on to de Blairsdale all right an' straight if it got a min' ter; but I ain't never gwine let it *lead* it no mo', an' I's a-gwine ter let Charles lead *me*." As the possibility of Charles ever leading Mammy seemed more than visionary, Mrs. Carruth gave up the argument. Besides, she had many other things to occupy her thoughts. In the fall of 19— Eleanor had entered college, and within the present college year would graduate with well won honors. From the moment she entered she resolved to be independent so far as her personal needs were con-

cerned. The tuition fees were paid by her great-aunt, Mrs. Eleanor Maxwell Carruth. Those she accepted because Mrs. Carruth, Sr., was amply able to meet them, but further than that she had resolved to be independent and she had been. The first year was the hardest; a freshman's possibilities are circumscribed; Sophomore year brought with it broader opportunities; Junior year established her place in the college world beyond all argument, and now with senior year her triumph and success lay close at hand. Moreover, this last year was being made much easier for her by Constance's success in her candy kitchen. The same autumn that Eleanor entered college Constance, in spite of Mammy's protests and opposition, had branched out on a scale to outrage all the old colored woman's instincts and traditions. But Mammy had stormed and scolded in vain, the addition to her little four-roomed cabin was built by Haydn Stuyvesant, all Constance's practical ideas for the needs of such a kitchen being followed out to the

minutest detail. He admired the girl's pluck and enterprise too much to bar her progress in any way, in spite of the fact that Mammy had sought to dissuade him from encouraging her in venturing further into the commercial world. Mammy had actually gone to Haydn's office to "ketch a word in private," as she put it. Finding all argument with Constance futile, she played what she hoped would prove her trump card. Haydn had listened with all deference to her arguments against "dat chile a-goin' on so scan'lous, an' a-startin' out fer ter make sweet stuff fer all creation, when dar's mo' sweet stuff in de shops dis minit dan folks kin swaller if dey stuff desefs de whole endurin' time."

"But, Mammy," Haydn had replied, as he looked kindly at the troubled old face before him, "you know none can equal Miss Constance's. It would be a downright piece of cruelty to deprive us all of our Saturday treat."

"Den let her go 'long de way she's been

a-goin'; let her make it down yonder in her Ma's kitchen, an' sell it in de Arcyde, jus' lak she been a-doin' all dese months. She ain't got no call fer to earn any mo' money'n she's a-earnin' right now. Ain't me an' Charles a-comin' 'long right spry wid our lunch counter in dar?" she insisted, with a nod of her turbaned head toward the section of the building in which she and Charles had carried on a flourishing trade ever since the immaculate counter had displayed its tempting viands to those who passed along the Arcade, and who were not slow to avail themselves of Mammy's wonderful art of cookery, or to bring their friends to enjoy it also.

"Yes, Mammy, you and Charles are real wonders to all who know you; but can't you understand why a girl of Miss Constance's type would never be happy if dependent upon others? Why, with all her young and splendid health, strength and energy, she must have some outlet for her ambition."

"Den let her go a-frolickin' lak her Ma did

when she was mos' sixteen! Let her go a-horsebackin' and a-dancin' at parties, an' a-picnicin' and all dose t'ings what a girl lak her ought ter be a-doin'. Wha' you s'pose ma ol' Massa Blairsdale say an' do if he could come back an' see de doin's in our house? Gawd-a-mighty, I wouldn't crave ter be aroun' if he come along unbeknownst an' see Miss Jinny's chillern grubbin' 'long in candy kitchens and teachin' oder folks' chillern, and hikin' all ober de kentryside peddlin' candy. He ax me fust, 'Mammy, yo' no count ol' nigger, wha' you been about?' An den he bang ma haid clean off!"

"I hardly think so, Mammy. The head and the heart have given too much to those he loved. But don't be troubled about Miss Constance. Remember this: no matter what she chooses to do, she will remain the sweetest of gentlewomen to the end of the story. You little guess the respect she already inspires in all who know her, if she is but sixteen. Let me help her by arranging her kitchen just as

her practical little head has planned it all. It is the least I can do. Miss Willing will bear the brunt of the hard work this winter, leaving Miss Constance free to finish her high-school course. It is a wise plan all around and a kinder one than you realize. The Arcade telephone switchboard was no place for a girl like Mary Willing, and to have been instrumental in removing her from the temptations she was sure to meet there is a more beautiful charity than those blazoned at large in the daily papers. Don't thwart it, Mammy. Let the little girl down yonder go on with her good work; she doesn't realize how far-reaching it is: perhaps she will never learn. Her mother does, however, and is using a very fine instrument to bring the work to perfection."

Mammy had sat very silent all the time, her old face wearing a puzzled expression, her keen eyes fixed upon a paper cutter which lay upon Haydn's desk, her lips pursed up doubtfully. Haydn did not break the silence; he only watched. After a few moments she

looked up, gave a perplexed sigh, and said: "Well, sah, p'raps yo' is right. P'raps yo' is. I ain't nothin' but a' ole nigger woman, but, bress Gawd, I loves ma white folks, an' I hates fer ter see de ole times so twisted up wid de new ideas, I sartain' does. It goes against de grain p'intedly."

"I can understand all that, dear old Mammy, but you mark my words, the results will justify the deeds."

So Mammy gave up the argument, though she was far from resigned to the plans.

And thus had the enterprise grown. Constance finished her year at the high-school, Mary Willing was established in the model little candy kitchen, with all its practical little appointments, and before long was nearly as proficient as Constance herself, and quite as enthusiastic. One year slipped by and another followed it. Then a third was added to the number, until now, with the autumn of 19— Constance was nineteen years old and Eleanor twenty-one.

Neither has changed a great deal. Eleanor's three years in the college world have given her greater poise and independence, a more matured outlook upon life, but the old Eleanor Carruth is still in evidence.

Constance had grown taller, the slight figure is more rounded, though still girlish. She still has the wonderfully sweet, frank expression, in spite of her two years out in the business world, for after her graduation she took firmer hold than ever of her business venture and branched out in many directions. New booths were opened in adjacent towns, private orders were filled for patrons in New York City, holiday consignments were made to more remote ones, to which her fame had spread through friends and friends' friends. Of course some losses had been sustained, but in comparison with her output and returns they were trivial, and her success was an established fact. But the work continued, her aim being absolute independence for her mother,

and for Jean the home and the atmosphere their mother had formerly known and loved.

And the silent partner of the firm, old Baltie, how had the three years dealt with him? A horse which has attained twenty-five years and is sightless is supposed to be out of the running, but Baltie lived apparently to prove the fallacy of such a supposition. At twenty-eight he was younger and more active than at twenty-four, his age when rescued by Jean. Nothing could restore his sight, but with each year his hearing seemed to have grown keener, and the ears were as sensitive as a wild animal's. But Baltie needs a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER II.

The Silent Partner and Others.

"Mother, have you seen Jean?" asked Constance, popping her head into her mother's room shortly after breakfast one glorious October morning.

"She was here but a few moments ago, dear," answered Mrs. Carruth, looking up from her desk at which she sat writing out the marketing list for Mammy.

"I want her to leave this parcel at Mrs. Morgan's on her way to school, and, by the same token, she ought to be on her way there this very minute. I wonder where she has gone?"

"Not very far, I think. She knows she must start at once."

Constance laughed as she replied: "I wonder if she ever will know? Time doesn't exist for her, or perhaps I would better say that

it exists only for her; she so calmly takes all she wishes. But she really must start now. I'll go hunt her up and get her headed in the right direction."

"Yes, do, Honey," urged Mrs. Carruth, as Constance hurried away in quest of the youngest member of the household.

Mrs. Carruth resumed her writing. The past three years had dealt kindly with her: Mammy and the daughters of the home had seen to that. Nothing could ever alter the gentle expression of her eyes, or change the tender curves of her lips. Each told its story of love for those nearest and dearest to her, as well as her sympathy and interest in her fellow-beings. Mrs. Carruth had passed her forty-seventh birthday, but did not look more than thirty-eight. The hardest years of her life were those following upon her husband's death, and the serious financial losses she was then forced to meet. Since Constance's venture and the success which had almost immediately attended it, the outlook for all had been

more hopeful, and if now living less pretentiously than she had lived during her husband's lifetime, she was none the less comfortable. Upon Hadyn Stuyvesant's advice Mrs. Carruth had not rebuilt the old home, although by careful economy she could have done so. But Hadyn was looking farther into the future than Mrs. Carruth looked. Perhaps his wish had some bearing upon the thought, for from the moment Hadyn Stuyvesant had met Constance Carruth *his* future was settled so far as he was concerned. But he was too wise to let the sixteen-year-old girl guess his feelings. The gulf between sixteen and twenty-three is a wide one. As the years advance it mysteriously narrows. At nineteen Constance often wondered why Hadyn seemed younger to her in his twenty-sixth year than he had at twenty-three. Never by look or word had he betrayed any warmer feeling for her than the good-comradeship established at the beginning of their acquaintance. He was like a brother in that dear home. Mrs. Carruth

consulted him freely upon all occasions. Eleanor accepted him as a matter-of-course; that was Eleanor's way. Constance found in him the jolliest companion. Jean adored him openly, and he was her valiant champion whenever she needed one. From the day he had taken his first meal in her home she had been to him the "Little Sister," and he never called her by any other name. Not long after that event she had coined a name for him—a funny enough one, too. Rushing into Constance's room in her impetuous way one day, she demanded: "Connie, when knights used to fight for their ladies, ever ever so long ago, what did they call them?—the knights I mean."

"Do you mean Knight Errant?" asked Constance, looking up to smile at the eager little girl.

"Knight Errant? Knight Errant?" repeated Jean, doubtfully. "No, somehow that doesn't fit him. I couldn't call him that, it's too long."

"Call whom, Jean?" Constance began to wonder what was simmering in this little sister's head.

"Mr. Stuyvesant. He calls me 'Little Sister,' and I want a name for him."

"Do you think mother would approve of your calling him by a nickname?"

"'Tisn't going to be a nickname; it's going to be a *love* name for him, just like his for me is," was Jean's curious distinction.

"Oh!" The tone did not imply deep conviction.

"Now, Connie, you don't understand at all. You think I'm going to be—be—, well, you don't think I'm respectful, but I *am*. I don't know anyone that I feel more respectfuller to than Mr. Stuyvesant. He's just lovely. Only just plain Mr. Stuyvesant keeps him such a long way off, and he mustn't be. Mother has adopted him, you know, 'cause we all agreed to lend part of her to him. So I must have a homey name for him. What were the other names they gave those old knights?"

"They were often called 'champions of their fair ladies,'" answered Constance, slipping her arm about Jean and drawing her close to her side.

"That's it! That just suits him, doesn't it? He was my champion the day Jabe Raulsbury turned old Baltie out to die in the road, and he has been a heap of times since when I've got into scrapes. So that's what I'm going to call him. He is down on the piazza talking with mother about the new fence, and I'm going right straight down to ask him if I may call him Champion," ended Jean, delighted with her new acquisition and bounding away.

"Don't interrupt Mother," warned Constance, always a little doubtful of the outbreaks of the fly-away.

Hadyn Stuyvesant had not only approved the name, but was delighted with the idea, and vowed from thenceforth to guard his "lady fair." So "Champion" he was from that moment on, and, long as the name was,

it had clung. The three years had not lessened Jean's love for him or his devotion to her.

As Constance descended the stairs in quest of Jean she met Mammy at the foot.

"Is yo' Ma up in her room, Baby?" she asked.

"Yes, Mammy, and just finishing the marketing list. Have you seen Jean? It is high time she started for school."

"Dat's de livin' truf, an' it's what I done tol' her a'reddy, but she boun' ter go out yonder to see dat hawse."

"Then I'm bound to go out yonder after her," laughed Constance, as she ran briskly down the hall, passed through the door which led to the piazza and opened upon the lawn. There was no sign of Jean, but Constance crossed the velvety turf to the stable at the further side of the grounds, passing on her way the candy kitchen, and calling cheerily to Mary Willing, who was already busy within: "Polly's got her kettle on for our candee," to

be promptly answered by: "Yes, and it's a-boiling, if you will come and see."

"Good! I will be there in just a minute. I'm hunting for Jean." A moment later she turned the corner of the stable and came upon Jean and Old Baltie.

To say that Old Baltie had become almost human during the four years spent in this home conveys very little idea of the mutual understanding existing between him and his friends, Jean and Mammy were, of course, his joint owners; but since his marriage to Mammy, Charles also claimed ownership. No one would have recognized the old horse for the one rescued by Jean. His coat was now as sleek as satin, his old body round and plump, his manners those of a thoroughly spoiled thoroughbred horse. It had not required all the four years spent with the Carruths to blot out the effects of Jabe's harsh treatment, or to revive in Baltie the memory of his earlier days as Grandfather Rawlsbury's pet. The interval in which he had fallen upon evil days

had vanished as an ugly dream, and with nobility's inherent qualities, whether manifested in man or beast, he had dismissed the memory, risen above it, and with all of his noblesse oblige was helping others to do likewise.

His wonderfully attuned ears were quick to catch the sound of Constance's footfalls upon the soft turf, and he greeted her with a stifled nicker, for his position made a gentlemanly greeting well-nigh impossible: he was lying at full length upon a bed of sweet clover, his head in Jean's lap. These two were never in the positions or situations of their kind if they could possibly achieve others.

"Hello!" called Jean, glancing up from pressing her cheek against one large satiny ear which she held against it.

"Thought I'd find you here, Honey; but I've got to hustle you off to school. Do you know what time it is?"

"Only half-past eight, and we're having a beau-ti-ful time, aren't we, Baltie, dear?"

"Hoo-hoo-hoo!" fluttered the delicate nos-

trils. Constance dropped down beside Jean and ran her hand along the warm, sleek neck. Another nicker acknowledged the caress, but the great horse did not stir. The clear morning sunshine flooded the paddock, Baltie's little kingdom, and filtered through the gorgeous sugar maples overhead. The air was clear and crisp, the ground dry as though night dews were unknown. Off at the edge of the paddock a cricket shrilled his monotonous little song of the coming winter—a snug stable for the old horse and a warm fireside for his friends.

"You really must go now, dear," urged Constance, rising to her feet after a final caress.

"Oh, dear, and he is so big and so warm and so soft and so good," protested Jean. "But I s'pose I must. Come, Baltie, you've got to get up. Now! All together!" and placing her arms beneath the great neck Jean gave the preliminary heave-ho! necessary to start the old horse. Four years before it would have

been impossible for him to get to his feet, but, as Mammy insisted:

"Charles Devon hadn't been Massa Stark's groom fer nothin'," and she herself was a master hand at "mashargin" (Mammy's pronunciation of massaging), a course of treatment to which Baltie had been most vigorously subjected, to the wonderful rejuvenation of his old bones and muscles.

A horse, even in his most nimble days of colthood, does not rise from a prone position with any great degree of grace; yet Baltie might have given points to some of his younger brethren. Up came his head, the slender forefeet were braced, there was a mighty heave and hoist, and Baltie stood upon all-fours, shaking clover leaves from his flanks.

"Now fly, Jean! Be sure to take the parcel for Mrs. Morgan. I'll stop a moment with Baltie to make your peace for your abrupt departure," said Constance, gayly, well knowing that Jean's leave-taking from her pet was usually a prolonged ceremony.

Away hurried the little girl, leaving the older sister to spend the ensuing five minutes with the old horse, who nozzled and fussed over her as only a petted horse knows how.

"Now, old silent partner, I must run away and look after my forewoman and get busy myself. Goodness, how the Carruth family is developing! Eleanor already offered a position at Sunnymeade for next fall, my humble self a full-fledged business woman with a flourishing trade; Jean junior partner with a private following of her own, and you, you dear, blind, faithful old creature, setting us all an example of faithfulness and devotion; Mammy and Charles the biggest hit of the whole establishment with their lunch counter, and yonder the little girl whom Mother has made over brand new! No wonder I'm proud; no wonder I'm sometimes afraid my head will be turned by all our good fortune and success. Keep me headed right, Baltie. If you, without sight, can steer a straight course, surely I, with both my eyes to the good, ought to be

able to. Good-bye, dear," and clasping her arms around the sleek, warm neck, Constance stood perfectly still for a moment or two, her head pillowed upon the silky mane, her thoughts travelling rapidly back across the intervening years—years so full of effort, anxiety, hope, disappointment, love and faith. The one which was beginning with this October—for it was in October that she had begun her work four years before—was bidding fair to prove a crisis in all their lives. Instinctively the girl felt this. Girl in years, yes, but a little woman in executive ability, foresight and execution, withal, still sweet and true, and retaining her faith in her fellow-beings. Never had she looked lovelier than at this moment standing there in the glorious October sunlight, her arms clasped about the big bay horse, her eyes shining with hope, health, courage, her cheeks glowing. She was dressed for her morning's work, her gown a simple tan-colored linen with white collar, cuffs and belt, a soft tie of brown silk at her throat. She was good to look at

this girl of nineteen, as she stood with such unstudied grace, the very personification of hope. Presently, with a little start, she came back to a realization of things around her, and with a parting caress for the blind horse ran lightly from the paddock across the lawn to the little candy kitchen, and entered with a cheery greeting.

CHAPTER III.

The Bee-hive.

When three years before, Hadyn Stuyvesant, the owner of the property rented by the Carruths, had followed out Constance Carruth's plans for a model kitchen in which she could make her candy, he was not a little surprised at the sixteen-year-old girl's practical ideas. She asked him to build an extension to the little cottage at the end of the grounds occupied by Mammy and Charles, and had drawn the plans and specifications herself. The result was a marvel to him.

The extension consisted of three rooms on the first floor and two on the second. Upon entering the door one found one's self in a good-sized room, with rubber-tiled floor all blue and white, the walls snowy in alabasterine. Here on numberless white enamelled shelves were placed the boxes of candy ready

for shipment. From this attractive room opened the packing room, floor, walls and ceiling scrupulous. Long zinc-covered tables ready for the pans of candy, little portable stands at hand to hold the boxes in which the candy was to be packed. Perhaps the most practical feature of this packing room was the height of the tables, or more correctly their lack of height. Constance had reason to know that one can be foot-weary after several hours spent in candy-making. Consequently these packing tables were made low enough to enable those working at them to sit upon the comfortable bent-wood chairs while doing the work, which often required several hours, for not only had the candy to be packed in its pretty boxes, but the boxes had to be wrapped and tied with dainty ribbons. Nothing must fall short of perfection.

But the crowning point of Constance's practicability was shown in the actual kitchen itself. This was also tiled, but the

tiles were of shining porcelain, washable, scrubable, scourable to the very limit. A big gas range stood at one side, near it hung pans, pots and kettles of every size and possible need, all of white enamel ware. A big porcelain sink and draining tray stood next. Close at hand was a large table, its top of white marble warranted to withstand the hottest candy which could be poured upon it, to chill it quickly for handling or cutting, and to come forth from its boiling baptism immaculate under the alchemy of hot soapsuds.

On the walls were great hooks, upon which to pull long ropes of molasses or cream candy. Along another side of the kitchen were shelves to hold the hundred and one ingredients which were to be transformed into the most toothsome of dainties, and these were too numerous to name. A spacious closet held aprons, caps, towels, dish-cloths and what not, needed in the work.

On the floor overhead, and reached by a quaint little stairway from the shipping room, was the stock room, where boxes, labels, wrapping paper, twine, and a hundred other needfuls were kept. In one corner a business-like roll-top desk, with still more business-like ledgers, told of the ability of this little lady to keep track of her finances. And room number five? Ah, the eternal feminine! Who says she must waive all claim to her womanly instincts, merge them in the coarser, less refined ones of the hurrying, struggling world around her when she sets out to be a bread-winner among her masculine contemporaries? If some do this, Constance Carruth was not to be numbered among them, and no better proof of it could have been offered than the "fifth wheel to her business wagon," as she laughingly called room number five. That little room is worthy of minute description.

To begin with, the walls were tinted a soft ivory white, with a delft blue frieze running

around the top. The floor was of hard wood, with a pretty blue and white rug spread in the center. On this stood a white enamelled table, with snowy linen cover, a reading lamp, the several books and magazines testifying to its primal use. Four or five comfortable wicker chairs, with cushions of pretty figured Japanese crepe, stood about. In one corner a couch with a delft blue and white cover and enough pillows to spell luxury, invited weary bodies to rest when labors were ended, and yet never once hinted that by removing the cover and pillows a bed stood ready for a guest if extra space were needed. Book shelves of white enamelled wood filled half one side of the room, and held every sort of cook-book ever published, as well as many of Constance's favorite authors. A white chiffonnier held many necessary articles, for after one has spent several hours over a boiling kettle one longs for a tub and fresh garments; and all these were at hand in the big closet. Opening from this

restful room was a perfectly appointed bathroom. Could plans have been more perfect?

Certainly the girl, bending over the big saucepan, stirring its boiling contents, felt that *her* little paradise had been gained when she changed from the bustling, rushing Arcade to the peace, tranquillity and refinement of her present surroundings. The accident which short-circuited the switchboard wires in the telephone booth that eventful Labor Day had brought to Mary Willing, even at the cost of a good deal of physical suffering, present advantages and an outlook for the future such as she had never pictured. Indeed, her horizon had been much too circumscribed for her imagination to reach so far. It needed the influence and environment of the past three years to make her fully appreciate the vast difference between the acquisitions which mere dollars can command, and those which true refinement of heart, mind, soul and body hold as invaluable and indeprivable heritages. Possibly

the best proof that she had taken the lesson to heart lay in the fact that "Pearl" Willing had completely dropped out of the world's ken, and in her stead, quiet, dignified Mary Willing moved and had her being. Unconsciously Mrs. Carruth had undertaken to solve a knotty, sociological problem, but the results already obtained seemed to justify her belief that she was right in her estimate of this girl. At all events she had reason to be sanguine of ultimate success in bending a hitherto neglected twig. It needed courage, however, upon Mrs. Carruth's part to undertake this reformation. From her childhood to her nineteenth year Mary Willing's environment had been, if not demoralizing, certainly detrimental to a higher development in any girl. Her associates were coarse, boisterous, heedless girls, without the faintest sense of the fitness of things, or the first rudiments of refinement. To earn enough money to clothe themselves in shoddy finery, to contribute as small a percentage of their

earnings to the family purse as possible, and to have as much "fun," never mind at whose expense, or at what sacrifice of their own dignity, bounded their aims and ambitions. And Mary Willing had seen no reason for not following in their footsteps. Handsomer than any of her companions, and holding a position where her personal charms were conspicuous for all who passed to comment upon them, she had used them to attract the attention of those whom she thought likely to contribute to her pleasure.

To make her more self-conscious, and senselessly pave the way to greater evil, her mother had continually urged her to make the most of her good looks while she had them, assuring her that unless she managed to "catch a rich husband with her handsome face she needn't hope to get one at all."

Was it any wonder the girl grew up vain, shallow, and with standards poorly calculated to withstand temptations if offered opportunely? Still, there was a certain some-

thing in her which, up to her nineteenth year, had saved her from anything worse than shallow flirtations; and then when everything seemed conspiring to lead her to more serious consequences of her folly, Fate had established close at her side a personality and atmosphere in such contrast to her own, and all she had ever known, that it acted as a dash of cold water acts upon a sleep-walker. At first she was startled, then roused, and finally thoroughly wakened to the perilous path she was following.

But the strangest part of it all lay in the fact that the individual which capricious Dame Fate had used as her instrument never for one moment suspected that she was being used at all, but continued on her sweet, cheery, sunny way entirely unconscious of her responsibilities. Perhaps therein lay her greatest strength. Then came the accident on the river, and Mrs. Carruth, quick to read and comprehend, found a field for the sweetest missionary work a woman can enter

upon—that of shaping the life of a young girl for the noblest position to which she can attain—a refined young womanhood, a beautiful wifehood, and a motherhood as perfect as God will give her grace to make it. Mary Willing could hardly have found a more beautiful example, and the three years had wrought miracles.

Mrs. Carruth had made haste slowly. The first year Mary Willing entered upon her duties in the candy kitchen she went and came daily, learning and applying herself with all the enthusiasm her gratitude to those she so admired and strove to emulate inspired. The relations between the girl and Constance were those of valued employee and respected employer. It could not have been otherwise. Mary had a vast deal to *un*-learn, the hardest of all things to accomplish, and when old impressions were effaced to begin an entirely new page. Gradually as time passed on the girl grew into her new environment. Old habits of manner and

speech gave way to gentler ones, old viewpoints shifted to those of these good friends, who had risen up at such a crucial point in her life and were fitting her to be a little woman in the truest sense. In the course of the three years just passed she and Constance had grown closer to each other. The latter, quick to see the former's sincere desire to improve, and take advantage of every opportunity to do so, felt the keenest sympathy for her less fortunate sister, and the strongest desire to aid her. Mary's aim and ambition was to grow "just exactly like Constance Carruth! The dearest, best and loveliest girl that ever lived," as she confided to her mother. The greatest obstacle to be overcome was the unhappy influence in Mary Willing's own home life. It sometimes seemed to Mrs. Carruth that whatever good they accomplished in the five and a half working days of the week was entirely undone during the one day and a half which the girl spent in the hurly-burly, the untidiness

and hopeless shallowness of her own home, to say nothing of the coarsening influence of a worthless, dissipated father's presence. Mrs. Carruth believed that Mary Willing had naturally been endowed with instincts far above the average of her class, though from what source inherited she could not understand, and that all needed to develop them was a more wholesome atmosphere, wise guiding, and, of course, separation from former contaminating influences. But she bided her time and, when least expecting to do so, discovered the secret. At length, when she felt the moment to be ripe, she suggested most tactfully that Mary come to live with them, to occupy the little room which had once been Mammy's, but, since her marriage to Charles, and her removal to the snug cottage adjoining the candy kitchen, had been newly decorated and furnished for what Jean, in her characteristic fashion, termed "the left-overs;" "left-overs" being any extra guest who might claim the hospitality of the

family when the other guest room was occupied. It was a pretty little room, up in the third floor at the rear of the house, and overlooked the lawn, the candy kitchen, Mammy's cottage, and the rolling country beyond owned by Jabe Raulsbury. It had been papered in the softest green paper, with garlands of pink roses as a border. The floor was carpeted with a deeper shade of ingrain filling, upon which lay two pretty rugs in pink and green. Dimity curtains, looped back with chintz bands, draped the windows. The furniture was of white enamel, with plain white iron bedstead. Cushions and coverings, as well as table and bureau scarfs, were of the chintz, edged with inexpensive lace—the bedspread of snowy white. Had the room been designed for Mary Willing's rich coloring it could hardly have suited her more perfectly. But it had not; Fate was simply working out her scheme not only in color but in influence. How great the influence of that simple little

room would prove not even Mrs. Carruth suspected, although she was a firm believer in the influence of one's surroundings.

When Mrs. Carruth suggested that Mary remain with them in order to be at hand whenever needed in an emergency, and to avoid during the cold, stormy days of winter the long trip to and from her own home, the girl had responded with an eagerness which touched Mrs. Carruth very deeply. "And if I come here to live you must let me pay my board," she cried, impulsively. Then, noticing the color which crept into the older woman's face, she hastened to add, contritely: "Oh, dear me! Shall I ever learn how to say things? I'm—I'm so—I mean I know so *little*. Please forgive me, Mrs. Carruth. I didn't stop to think how rude that was. I ought to have said you must not pay me such a large salary if you let me live here. I know that no amount of money that I could earn could pay my board. I've learned *that* much, you see, even if I don't seem to have

learned very much more during the last two years. But I'm truly, truly trying hard to learn."

"I know it, dear. Perhaps I am over-sensitive. Old instincts are hard to overcome. No, I do not think we will change the salary. Constance had already thought of increasing the sum she is now paying you, for you earn it. Work has increased rapidly during these two years, and you are very proficient, and very valuable to her."

"Oh, I am so glad! I want so much to be."

"You are; so live here with us, and let the little room and the 'bread and salt' stand as a part of your salary."

Mary Willing had never had occasion to enter this room, and when Constance led her to it upon the day she took up her residence with them, the girl stopped short upon the threshold, clasped her hands in a little ecstacy of rapture, and cried: "I'll live up to every single thing in it, for only a gentlewoman could have arranged such a room,

and only a gentlewoman has any right to live in it. It just speaks of that dear, blessed little mother of yours from every corner, and from every single rose on the paper and the chintz; and if I don't live to make her proud of me I shall want to know why."

CHAPTER IV.

The Busy Bees.

"I'm afraid the head of the firm is very late this morning," cried Constance, merrily, as she entered the candy kitchen. Mrs. Carruth had long since given it the name of the Beehive.

"I think the head of the firm has earned the right to arrive late if she wishes to," answered Mary Willing, glancing backward over her shoulder as she stood before the gas range. Her arms were bared to the elbows, for the waist she wore was made with short sleeves, in order to give her perfect freedom in her work. They were beautiful arms, strong, well-rounded and smooth as ivory.

"No, indeed, the head of the firm is a far cry from such indulgences, let me tell you. She has just heaps and loads to accomplish before she can arrive at such luxuries. But

how goes the candy, Mary? Are you ready for me yet?"

"Not quite; but I shall be in just a few minutes. See, it is beginning to rope," was the reply as the candy-maker lifted a spoonful of the boiling syrup and let it run back into the kettle, the last drop falling from the spoon quickly forming into little threads, which wavered in the hot air rising from the range.

"Better begin beating it now, and let me pop in the nuts; then we'll pour it off," answered Constance, her practiced eye quick to see that another moment's boiling might undo a morning's work.

"Well, you're the boss! Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Constance, I didn't mean that! I mean you're—" and the girl paused in confusion, her face coloring a deeper red than the heat and her work had brought there.

"I'll make believe I didn't hear," answered Constance, a softer light filling her eyes in place of the pained one which for a little instant had crept into them, as a cloud can cast

a momentary shadow upon a wind-swept, shining October sea.

"You have to make believe so many times," answered the girl, contritely, as she lifted the kettle from the range, and placing it upon the marble table, began to beat vigorously.

"Not nearly so often as I used to," answered Constance, emptying into the kettle a great dish of walnuts. Mary again beat vigorously with her big spoon, shaking her head doubtfully the while. Constance did not look at her, but, arming herself with a large knife, guided the candy into the little grooves which would shape it as it was poured upon the table from the tilted kettle. One end of the table had been blocked out like a checkerboard, each inch square lined for cutting the candy accurately.

"Now watch me do my stunt," she cried, standing with knife suspended over the fast chilling candy, and smiling up at the tall girl at her side.

"Do you forgive my—my—oh, the things

I'm forever saying that must feel just like a file drawn over your teeth? If you only knew how hard it is to forget old ways and words and learn the better ones!"

"Do you see that little motto over there?" asked Constance, pointing with her poised knife to a card, one of several hanging upon the wall of the kitchen. The one toward which she pointed was in dark blue letters upon a white ground. It read: "Forget It!"

"Yes, that is just exactly what I am forever doing," was Mary's petulant reply. "If I didn't forget all the time I'd never *have* to forget at all, and if that isn't the finest bit of Irish you've ever heard, please improve on it if you can."

The laughter which floated out through the open door greeted Mrs. Carruth as she entered the packing room.

"May I share the joke?" she asked. "I'm sure it must be a good one, and rich as the odors floating out to tempt nose and palate. Cut it quickly, Honey; I know it must be

chilled enough and it does smell so good. Mary, you are a master hand. M—mm—m! A veritable lump of delight, though still slightly warm," she ended as Constance dropped into her mouth a square of the nut fudge she had just cut from the great mass covering the table.

"Sit down, Mumsey, dear, and be good, consequently happy, while we work like beavers. How does it chill so rapidly? Quick! Mary, you cut at that end while I work at this. We've pounds and pounds to get done this morning if we are to fill all the orders."

For a few moments only the swift swish of the great knives as they cut the candy could be heard, now and again one girl or the other catching up a square upon the end of her knife and pausing just long enough to offer it to Mrs. Carruth. Presently all was cut, and as it lay cooling they set to work upon the next batch to be made, Mary cleaning the fudge kettle while Constance got out another for the walnut creams. Each kind of candy had its

special cooking utensils, and no others were ever used for it. In a few minutes Constance had a second batch of candy bubbling upon her range, ready to turn over to Mary when she should have finished washing the kettles and other articles used in making the fudge.

"I came out to be useful; may I prove it?" asked Mrs. Carruth.

"Just sit and watch us work. That helps," answered Mary, as she relieved Constance.

"Will you be just a heap happier if I let you help wrap the fudge in paraffin paper?" asked Constance as she nestled her head for a moment in her mother's neck. Eh? Will you? You busy body. Why can't you let us do all the work and so win all the glory? I suspect you're a terribly selfish mother; yes, I do. You needn't protest. You won't even let your girls, real own ones or adopted ones, make their sticky marks in this world in peace. You must come poking out here to buzz around in the hive and beg honey."

"I don't have to beg, for it is voluntarily

given," laughed Mrs. Carruth, kissing the soft cheek so close to her lips. "This kind I mean, and I know of none sweeter."

"Gross flattery! Now I *know* you are scheming, so 'fess right off," cried Constance, whirling around to peer into her mother's face, and break into a merry laugh.

Mrs. Carruth pursed up her lips into a derisive pucker, and looked into the merry eyes of this sunshiny daughter.

"And if I am, what then?" she asked.

"I knew it!" was the triumphant retort. "But I dare not waste time bringing you to order now. Yes, you may help wrap. If anything will wheedle you into being good, letting you get busy will," ended Constance, turning to the table and deftly lifting the squares to the flat pans upon which they were to be carried to the packing room.

"Shoo along in there and get busy if you must, and while you are getting sticky enough to satisfy even yourself, you will tell me what is simmering. And mind, Mary can hear, too;

so if it is too anarchistic she will come to the rescue. Oh, you can't do as you used to. Whyfor do I make candy by the pounds innumerable? Whyfor do I send it to tickle many palates? Whyfor do I take in dollars galore? All, *all* to keep you from running off on some wild project whereby you shall earn as many more dollars to my utter undoing, lost glory and disgrace appalling to contemplate in a girl who has a tendency to grow fat—yes, fat!"

As she rattled on with her nonsense Constance worked busily getting out her paraffin paper, the necessary boxes and the dainty ribbons with which to tie them. Then seating herself beside her mother, who was already busy wrapping the fudge in its little squares of paraffin, she began packing the candy in its boxes.

"Now, what is it?" she asked, looking quizzically into the sweet, lovable face. Mrs. Carruth laughed a low, little laugh as she asked: "Why are you so sure that it is anything?"

"I know the signs. They have periodical

simmerings, sort of seismic rumblings, so to speak," nodded Constance, working swiftly.

"I feel such a drone in a busy hive—" began Mrs. Carruth, then hesitated.

"I knew it! Mary, it has bubbled to the surface again," Constance called into the kitchen, where brisk footsteps testified to the occupant's industry.

"Shall I come to your rescue?" was the laughing question.

"Not yet; I'm still able to handle her, though there is no telling how soon she will get beyond me. I'll call you if I see signs," was called back. "Now go on, you incorrigible woman, and tell your long-suffering child what bee you have buzzing in your bonnet now. A brand new fall bonnet, too! It's outrageous to so misuse it after all the trouble I've been put to to induce you to indulge in it at all, and not sneak off to Madame Elsie with a lot of old finery to be made over into a creation warranted (by her) to deceive the keenest eye. Oh, I know your sly ways, and have to lie awake

nights to think how to thwart them. You sly, wicked woman, to deprive me of my sorely needed rest and beauty sleep. Why, I'm growing thin—"

"Alas for consistency!" interrupted Mrs. Carruth, derisively. "A moment ago you assured me you were growing fat. That scores me one, and entitles me to have my little say-so and hold my own against this conspiracy of—how many shall I say? Six. Yes, think of the outrageous odds brought against one weak woman."

"Weak! Weak! Why, it requires all the energy and shrewdness the combined force can bring to bear upon her to keep her within bounds, doesn't it, Mary?"

"And we don't always do it then," was the bantering reply.

"No, we do not," was the emphatic agreement. "Neither Mammy, Charles, Eleanor, Jean, Hadyn, you, nor I can feel sure that we have settled her vaulting ambitions at once

and for all time. Is your candy ready for me yet?—Don't need me? Very well, I'll keep at this job, then; it's a co-operative job, and the hardest part of it is to hold down my rival. There, those boxes are all packed, and now, Madame busy-body, I'm ready to listen. No, you are not going to tie bows while you talk, it gives you too great an advantage. Look right straight into my eyes, and while you confess your desires to transgress you shall keep up a sub-conscious train of thought along this line: 'This is my second daughter, Constance Blairsdale Carruth. She is past nineteen years of age. She weighs one hundred and eighteen pounds. She still possesses all her faculties unimpaired. Is endowed (I hope!) with the average degree of intelligence and common sense. She has never been ill a day in her life (whistle and knock wood when you think that), and she is taking mighty good care of the health she enjoys. She has been at work four years transmuting syrups and sugars into dollars and cents, in which under-

taking she has met with rather amazing success, and is going to meet with even greater. Her plan is to make one dear, blessed little mother quite independent, and—please God—(these words were spoken in a mere whisper)—she will compass it. Now, are you going to let her do all this quite untrammeled, or are you going to worry her by suggesting all manner of wild plans for doing things for yourself?"

Constance had risen from her chair while speaking, and dropped upon her knees before her mother to clasp her arms about her waist and look into the face she loved best on earth. The girl's expression was half grave, half merry, though wholly sweet and winning.

Mrs. Carruth took the upraised face in both her hands, bent toward it, rested her lips upon the soft, silky hair, and said gently:

"Dear heart, dear heart; my dauntless little daughter. Yes, you *are* doing all and far more than you have said, and that is exactly the reason I wish to contribute my share.

Can't you see, dear, that I feel such a dull, dull drone in this busy hive?"

"Dull?—when you keep the hive in such running order that we never even suspect where the machinery which runs it is located. Dull?—when you keep our home as charming in every detail as it was when you had ample means at your command to conduct it. Dull?—when you are here every moment as its sweet and gracious head to make it such a home as few know in this northern world, where homes for the most part mean simply a roof to cover one, and under which food is served three times daily. Mother, can't you see and feel what you are doing for us girls? How you are surrounding us with an atmosphere so beautiful, so exceptional in these days of hurry and bustle that its influence must bide with us all our days and remain a dear memory all our lives? We may leave it sooner or later, other duties may call us away, but nothing, nothing can ever deprive us of all this—" Constance raised one arm to sweep it compre-

hensively over the room in which they sat and all-embracingly beyond. "So please let all rest as it is. Let Nonnie work away at college, and later—" here a merry twinkle filled the girl's eyes—"let her, well, let her take up the co-ed plan, if she likes. Things seem shaping that way if the signs can be trusted. Let me boil a way to fame and fortune. Let Jean —if Fate so decrees—though by the same token I've a notion she won't, follow in Nonnie's footsteps. Alack! Jean's energies do not point toward the campus of ——— college. I misdoubt," and Constance smiled. Then, turning serious again, she resumed: "Will you promise me something?"

"Will you first listen to my little plan?" was her mother's counter question.

"Yes, I'll listen."

"You know how I delight in fancy work, dear, and there is such a field for embroidery and other kinds I do so well. The Woman's Exchange, you know."

"You may do all you want to—yards,

pounds, dozens, heaps—however it is described—but you must do it for *our* home, not other people's. I'll tell you what you may do, all against the coming climax, for it is coming, you mark my words: You begin right now and make dozens of the daintiest pieces of underwear imaginable—"

"Oh, Constance!" cried Mrs. Carruth, reproachfully, the softest rose creeping into her cheeks.

"Can't help it!" protested Constance. "I know that co-ed plan will develop. My heart! Do you think I'm blind as a bat? When a man bids a girl good-bye at a railway station and helps her on board the smoking-car instead of the Pullman, and neither of them knows the difference—well. You just wait till spring, my lady. It is a case of 'I smell a mouse, I feel him in the air,' etc., get busy, Mumsey, get busy. The entire winter won't be too long, I tell you; for when that explosion takes place it will be with a bang, you mark my words."

"Connie, Connie, this is dreadful!"

"May be," answered Constance, wagging her head dubiously; "but I'm afraid we must resign ourselves to it. Mercy only knows how she will come home at Thanksgiving. I believe he is to meet her. I'm prepared for a box car or even a flat car. Yes, it is dreadful, you are quite right. Wonder how it will affect me if I ever succumb? But take my advice, get busy, Mumsey, and, dear, remember this—" swiftly the tone changed from the jesting one to the tenderest as the girl rested her head upon her mother's shoulder: "You represent *home* to us girls. Without you it would be the harp without its strings, the organ without its pipes. It would disintegrate. Keep it for us. Try to feel that you are doing far more in our busy hive by just being our Queen Bee than you ever could by going abroad in the land to gather the honey. Let *us* do that, and remember this—I read it not long ago and I'll never forget it:—

'The beautiful gracious mother,
Wherever she places her chair,
In the kitchen (this one) or the parlor,
The center of home is there.'

Ready for me in there, Mary? Mother is perishing for occupation, and I've scolded her as much as I dare," and, with a tender kiss upon her mother's cheek, the girl ran swiftly into the next room.

CHAPTER V.

Mammy Makes Investigations.

"Bress de Lord, we ain't got ter run no counter on Thanksgiving Day!" was Mammy's fervent exclamation, as she rose from her bed on the Monday preceding Thanksgiving Day. Hurrying across the room she opened the draughts in the little stove, for Charles' rheumatic twinges must not be aggravated by the sudden chill of rising from a warm bed to dress in a cold room. The fire had been carefully covered the night before, and now, replenished by a few shovelfuls of coal, and a vigorous shake of the revolving grate, was soon snapping and roaring right comfortably. The rattling had served more than one end, as had the clatter made by putting on the fresh fuel. Although Mammy had no idea of permitting her spouse to contract a cold from dressing in a cold room, she, on the other hand, saw

no reason why he should indulge in over-many morning winks after she, herself, had risen and begun the duties of the day.

"Eh? Um, yas, Honey," came in somnolent tones from the billows of feathers in which Charles' shiny bald pate, with its fringe of snowy wool, was nearly buried. Mammy could not abide the new-fangled hair mattresses, but clung tenaciously to her bygone ideas of "real downright comfort fer a body dat's clar beat out when de day's done. No, sir-ee! Don't talk ter me ob dese hyar ha'r mattresses. I ain't got a mite er use fer 'em needer has Charles, *if I ses-so.* Give me de suah 'nough fedders wid de down on 'em; none ob yo' hawse ha'r stuffed bags. De fedders fits wherever dey teches, 'an snugs up mighty soft on de achy spots, but dose highfalutin' h'ar mattresses,—well, dey jest lak dese hyar Norf folks we meet up wid: ef yo' kin fit *dem,* well an' good, yo's all right, but does yo' t'ink dey's gwine ter try fer ter fit yo'? Go 'long, chile."

Consequently the bed, which stood in the bedroom of the little cottage in which Mammy and Charles lived, boasted a feather bed, the like of which for downiness and size was rarely seen. It had been made by Mammy herself of the downiest of feathers, plucked by her own hand from the downiest of her own geese, hatched under her own critical eyes when she was a young woman on her old master's plantation. It had taken many geese, many days, much drying and curing to achieve such a triumph; and the "baid" was Mammy's most cherished possession. The airings, sunnings, beatings and renovatings to which it had been subjected during the years she had owned it would have totally wrecked any less perfect article of household economy; but it had survived all, and each morning, after its prescribed hours of airing, was "spread up" into a most imposing mound, covered with a "croshey" spread, made by the sanctified hands of "ol' Miss" (Mrs. Carruth's mother), and still

further adorned by "piller shams," made by "Miss Jinny" herself.

More than one of Mrs. Carruth's guests had been conducted through Mammy's cottage by its proud inmate, and the "baid" and its coverings displayed with justifiable pride.

"Yas, wake up!" commanded Mammy, making her own toilet with despatch. "We's got a pile o' wo'k ter do terday, an' I'se got-ter see dat dose no count nigger gals what's a-pertendin' ter do Miss Jinny's wo'k now-a-days gits a move on 'em. Dey pesters me mightily, dough I ain't let 'em 'spect it, I tells yo'. Ef I did dey'd jes nachelly climb right ober de house an' ebery las' pusson in it. But I knows how ter han'le 'em ef Miss Jinny don't. She t'ink she gwine do it jes lak she useter back yonder on her Pa's planta-tion, but it don' do up hyar. Trouble is wid dese hyar Norf niggers dey ain' know dey *is* niggers, and dey gits mighty mix in dey minds twell somebody come along and tells 'em jest 'zackly what dey is, an' whar dey

b'longs at. I done tol' dem two in yonder, an' I reckon dey's learnt a heap since I done took 'em in han'. Yas, I does. Dey don' come a-splurgin' an' a-splutterin' roun' me no mo' wid dey, 'Dis hyar ain' ma juty. I ain' 'gaged fer ter do dat wuk.' My Lawd! I come pretty nigh bustin' dat Lilly May's haid las' week when I tell her ter do sumpin' an' she say dat ter me. She foun' out what her juty was, an' she ain't fergit it again, I tell yo'. Now come 'long down, Charles, I gwine have brekfus ready befo' yo' get yo' wool breshed," and off hurried the old woman to begin the routine of her more than busy day.

The clock was striking five when Charles came slowly down the stairs and entered the immaculate kitchen. The past three years have dealt kindly with the old couple in spite of their incessant labors. Mammy has not changed in the least. Charles is a trifle more bent, perhaps, but the three years have certainly not detracted from the old man's ap-

pearance, nor have they robbed him of any strength. Indeed, he seems in better health and physical condition than upon the day he celebrated his golden wedding. Mammy has made up for the lost years by caring for him as she would have cared for a child.

The business which they started in the Arcade has flourished and prospered beyond their wildest hopes. Charles still holds the honorary position of "Janitor-in-Chief" at the Arcade, a sinecure in every sense of the word excepting one; he keeps the acting janitor up to the high mark in the performance of *his* duties, greatly to Mr. Porter's amusement. He also keeps the dapper mulatto youth, who now serves at the lunch counter headed due north. To that young man Charles is "Mr. Devon," of the firm of "Blairsdale & Devon."

At the cottage Mammy still cooks, bakes, preserves and concocts with all her wonderful skill, assisted by a little colored girl, the eldest of those whom Jean impressed upon Mammy's wedding day.

Oh, Mammy is a most important personage these days.

Breakfast over in the little cottage, and it was a breakfast fit for a king, Mammy began issuing her orders like a general, and Charles lived only to obey.

"Now hike in dar an' git de furnace a-goin' good, an' den go 'long ter de gre't house an' have it good an' warm befo' dem chillern wakes up. I cyant have em' ketchin' cold, an' de mawnin's right snappy," she said, as dish-towel in hand she looked out of her kitchen door at the glistening world, for a heavy hoar frost covered lawn and foliage, prophesying a storm before many days.

"Here, put on yo' coat! What's de use ob my rubbin' yo' shoulder wid linnimint ef yo' gwine right spang out dis here warm kitchen inter de chill ob de mawnin' widout wroppin' up? Laws-a-massy, it tek mos' de whole endurin' time ter keep you from doin' foolishnesses, I clar it do."

Charles chuckled delightedly. It was, on

the whole, rather flattering to be so cherished and looked after as he had been during the last three years. Poor old soul, those he had spent alone had been barren enough of care or comforts.

"You needn't ter snort dat-a-way," protested his dominating wife. "I's only jes' a-watchin' out fer my *own* sake. I'se got a sight ter do 'sides nussin' rheumatics an' tekin' keer sick folks wid a misery in dey backs."

"Honey, yo's a wonder. Yas, yo' *is*," was Charles' parting rejoinder, as he toddled off to the duties, which to him, as well as to Mammy, were labors of love. Before many minutes had passed the little candy kitchen was snug and warm for its mistress, and then the old man made his way to the "gre't house," as he and Mammy, true to earlier customs, always called the home which sheltered their white folks. Mammy had already finished her own household tasks and met him at the door. Together

they entered the silent house, their key making not the slightest sound, lest they disturb the sleeping inmates. The maids now in Mrs. Carruth's service did not sleep in the house, but came at seven each morning, and woe betide the tardy one! Mammy was always on hand, and her greeting was governed by the moment of the said damsel's arrival. There were a few duties, however, which Mammy would permit no other than herself to perform. She must see that the breakfast table was properly laid, the breakfast under way and the rooms dusted, aired and warmed before she stole softly upstairs to call her "chillern." Then she turned all over to her dusky satellites, and at once became grand high potentate and autocrat.

It was a few minutes past seven when she entered Mrs. Carruth's room with a cheery "Mawnin', honey. 'Spose ef I lets yo' sleep any longer yo' gwine give me sumpin' I ain't cravin' fer ter git. Cyant fer de life er

me see why yo' boun' ter git up dese mawnin's. Why won' yo' let me bring up yo' tray, honey?" said the good old soul, moving softly about the room, raising the window shades and turning on the valve of the radiator.

"Because I have all I can do as it is to keep you and the girls from spoiling me completely," returned Mrs. Carruth, as she rose from her bed and stepped into the adjoining bathroom, where Mammy already had her bath prepared.

"Well, it's de biggest job we-all ever is tackled," insisted the old woman, as she placed a chair before the dressing table and took from the closet the garments Mrs. Carruth would need for the day. Since sunnier times had come to this home Mammy had fallen back into old habits. The "chillern," as she called Eleanor, Constance and Jean, were called before their mother was awakened, but "Miss Jinny" claimed her undivided attention, and it would have nearly

broken Mammy's loving old heart had Mrs. Carruth denied her this privilege, so long made impossible by the strenuous days and manifold duties following upon the misfortunes which succeeded Mr. Carruth's death.

The delight of Mammy's life was to assist at her "Miss Jinny's" toilet, as she had done in her mistress' girlhood days—to brush and arrange the still abundant hair, and to hand her a fresh handkerchief and say, as she had said to the young girl years ago:

"Gawd bless yo', honey! Yo' is as sweet as de roses dis mawnin'."

When all was completed to her satisfaction, and Mrs. Carruth was about to leave the room, Mammy remarked, with well-assumed indifference:

"I 'spose dat Lilly done got Miss Nonnie's room all fix jes right, but I reckons I better cas' ma eyes ober it; cyant trus' dese girls wid no 'sponserbility, nohow."

"I think everything is in perfect order, Mammy, but I dare say you will feel happier

if you give those little touches which you alone can give. Eleanor will recognize them and be happier because you gave them. It will be a joy to us all to have her back again, won't it, although she has not been away so very long after all."

"No'm, she ain't. How long she gwine be wid us dis time?"

"Not quite a week, Mammy. She will reach here this afternoon and must leave us early Saturday; Thanksgiving holidays are short ones. We shall have her longer at Christmas, then we will count the days till Easter, and after that to June, when we will have her for a long, long holiday, and college days will be ended."

"M'm-u'm," nodded Mammy, drawing the coverings from the bed and laying them carefully over chairs to air. "Spec she'll find dat trip down from up yonder mighty tiresome. Trabblin' all alone is sort of frazzlin'."

"She is hardly likely to travel alone,

Mammy. So many of her college mates will be journeying the same way, and even if they were not, she will be pretty sure to meet Mr. Forbes; he was obliged to run up to Springfield on Saturday and expects to return today. They may meet on the same train."

Mammy was looking out of the window. It would have made very little difference had she been facing Mrs. Carruth. Her face was absolutely inscrutable, as she answered:

"'Spec dat would save Miss Nonnie a heap ob trouble. Yas'm, mebbe dey will meet up wid one anoder."

Mrs. Carruth went upon her way to the breakfast room. Mammy had learned all she wished to know.

At four o'clock that afternoon Miss Jean Carruth was perched upon her point of vantage, from which every object approaching her home could be descried. It was not a particularly easy point to reach, but that only added to its attraction; nobody else was likely to choose it. Nearly everyone sought

the terrace, the piazza, or the upper windows in preference to the stable roof, even though the stable roof boasted a delightful assortment of gables and dormer windows, to say nothing of a broad gutter, around which one could prance at the imminent risk of a header to the ground, at least twelve feet below. In the golden haze of that mellow November afternoon, for autumn lingered late this year, Jean sat curled up in her corner, her chin resting in her palms, and her wonderful eyes fixed upon the road leading up the hill to her home. It was in reality more street than road, but was nearly always mentioned as the "hill road," owing to its contrast to the broader highway from which it branched and zig-zagged up the hill to the more sparsely settled section of River-edge. The watcher commanded all its length. Presently the shining eyes lighted up with a queer, half-delighted, half-defiant expression. Far down the road a vehicle was approaching; it was one of the railroad

station surreys, and in it were seated two people, besides the driver: two people quite oblivious to all the rest of the world, if one could judge by their absorbing interest in each other, for the keen eyes watching them could discern this, even from their owner's distance from the surrey.

"Um." The utterance might be interpreted almost any way. Then, "*Now*, I dare say, we've got to have him here all this evening, and all to-morrow, and all the next day, and all every day; and I don't want him around every single minute. My goodness, it was bad enough before Nonnie left for —— College; we never could get a single word in edgeways. I wonder if he's going to board here? I used to like him when he just came to see us all, but now he's tickled to death if everybody's engaged when he shows up; *everybody but Nonnie*. I reckon I've got to take things in hand. Nonnie's only twenty-one, and he's, he's? I do believe he's about *forty-one*, though I never could get him to

tell. But it doesn't make any difference! He's too old for Nonnie, and I'm not going to let him have her," was the emphatic conclusion to this monologue, as Jean scrambled to her feet and gave a defiant nod toward the vehicle, which had just drawn up in front of the carriage block. At that moment Mrs. Carruth and Constance hurried down the steps to greet the new arrivals. Evidently the welcome accorded the masculine member of the party aroused a keen sense of resentment in Jean, and some manner of outlet for her feelings became imperative. Physical exercise was her usual safety-valve, and in this instance she chose one which had on former occasions proved effective, and more than once brought Mammy to the verge of nervous prostration, and the dire prophecy that "sooner or later dat chile gwine brek her neck." As before stated, the gutter was wide, it was also a stoutly constructed one of galvanized iron, but it had *not* been designed for a promenade, much less a running

track for athletic training. Nevertheless, it had to serve as one this time, for Jean started running around it as though bent upon its destruction, or her own. It came near proving her own, for just as Homer Forbes was placing a couple of suit cases upon the piazza he chanced to catch sight of the prancing demoiselle, and with a shout of: "Great Josephus! Are you courting sudden death?" made a wild dash for the stable.

With a defiant skip, Jean made for the other side at top speed, lost her balance, slipped, and the next second was hanging suspended by her arms between earth and sky. Had she not been lithe as a cat she never could have saved herself. Forbes was nearly petrified.

"Hang on! Confound it, what took you up there, anyway?" he cried, with no little asperity, as the others hurried across the lawn to the trapeze performer's rescue.

"My feet took me up and my hands are keeping me here. Stand from under! I'm going to drop."

"Drop nothing!" was the very un-savant like retort. "You'll break both your legs. Hold on till I can get up there," and the would-be rescuer darted within the stable.

How she managed it no one could quite grasp, but there was a flutter of skirts, a swing, and Jean was in a little heap upon the soft turf. Springing lightly to her feet and dusting the grass from her palms, she said:

"Hello, Nonnie! I got *him* out of the way long enough to hug you without having him watch how it's done. Reckon he'll learn soon enough without me to teach him. Come on into the house, quick. He'll find out that I'm not killed when he looks out of the window."

If Mrs. Carruth seemed resigned, Constance quite convulsed and Eleanor unduly rosy, Jean seemed oblivious of those facts.

CHAPTER VI.

THANKSGIVING.

With the happier outlook resulting from Constance's success in her candy-making, it had been deemed advisable to send Jean to the private school from which Eleanor had graduated. Consequently, that autumn Jean had been enrolled among its pupils, and her place in the public school at which she and Constance had been pupils knew her no more, and Jean was much divided in her mind as to whether she was made happier or otherwise by the change. In the old school were many friends whom she loved dearly, and whom she missed out of her daily life. In the new one was her boon companion, Amy Fletcher, and also a number of the girls whom she constantly met in the homes of her mother's friends. But Jean was a loyal little soul, and her interest in

her fellow-beings a lively one. She could hardly have been her mother's daughter otherwise. Naturally in the public school were many children from the less well-to-do families of Riveredge, and not a few from those in very straitened circumstances. Among the latter were three girls very near Jean's own age. They were sisters, and were ambitious to complete the grammar school course, in order to fit themselves for some employment. There were other children older and other children younger; in fact, there seemed to be no end to the children in the Hodgeson family, a new one arriving upon the scene with the punctuality of clockwork. This fact had always disturbed Jean greatly.

"If there only *would* come an end to the Hodgesons," she lamented to her mother. "The trouble is, we no sooner get settled down and think we've reached the end than we have to begin all over again. Those babies keep things terribly stirred up. Don't you think you could make Mrs. Hodgeson understand

that she could get on with fewer of them, Mother? You see, the clothes never do hold out, and as for that last baby carriage you managed to get for her, why, it's just a wreck already. The other day, when I went by there on my way to the Irving School, I saw Billy Hodgeson riding the newest and the next newest, and the *third* newest in it, and the third newest had a puppy in his arms. No carriage could stand all that, could it?"

"I'm afraid not, dear. Perhaps we had better ask some other friends if they have a carriage they no longer need."

"Oh, no, don't! Please, don't! If you do, Mrs. Hodgeson will think she's got to get a brand new baby to put into it, for the old babies wouldn't match, you know. No, please, don't."

"Very well; we must let them get on with the old ones, both babies and carriage, I see," Mrs. Carruth answered, much amused.

"Yes, I really would; but here is something that's bothering me," and Jean snuggled close

into the encircling arms of the big chair in which she and her mother sat for this twilight hour conference.

"What are they going to do when Thanksgiving Day comes? No turkey on earth would be big enough to go 'round, even if they could buy one, which I don't believe they can. I was talking to Mrs. Hodgeson about it just the other day, and she said she was afeered her man couldna buy one nohow this year; they was so terrible intortionate in the prices," concluded Jean, lapsing unconsciously into the slipshod Mrs. Hodgeson's vernacular.

"I think she must have meant extortionate," corrected Mrs. Carruth.

"Perhaps she did; I don't know. But I'll bet five cents they won't have a thing when the day comes around, and I think that's awful."

"We are sending out a number of baskets from the church, and I have asked that one be sent to the Hodgesons," was Mrs. Carruth's hopeful reply. It was not welcomed as she anticipated.

"That won't do a bit of good," answered Jean, with a dubious shake of her copper-tinted head. "Not a *single bit,* for when Mrs. Hodgeson said she reckoned they'd have to get along without a turkey I said right off that I thought I could manage one all right, 'cause you could get one sent to her. My, but she got mad! And she told me she guessed she could get along without no charity turkey; that Hodgeson always *had* managed to fill up the young ones somehow, and if he couldn't do it on turkey this year he could do it on salt pork. Ugh! Wouldn't that be awful? Why, Mammy won't have salt pork near her except for seasoning use, as she calls it. No, we've got to do something else for those everlasting Hodgesons."

Mrs. Carruth thought the term well applied, even though she did not say so; they were everlasting. But she was hardly prepared for Jean's solution of the problem with which she had seen fit to burden her youthful shoulders.

Mrs. Carruth's Thanksgiving guests were Hadyn Stuyvesant and Homer Forbes. Her table was laid for six, and a pretty table it was, suggestive in its decorations of the day. According to her Southern traditions, the meal was ordered for two o'clock instead of the more fashionable hour favored by her Northern friends. Her guests had arrived, and Charles, the very personification of the old family servitor, had just announced with all the elegance and mannerism of which he was capable:

"De Madam is sarved."

Upon this day Mammy had taken affairs strictly into her own hands. No one except herself should prepare her Miss Jinny's Thanksgiving dinner. The other servants might assist Charles in serving it, but the actual preparation and cooking must be done by her own faithful hands. Consequently all the marketing for this occasion had been personally looked to by Mammy and Charles. In their chariot of state, drawn by Baltie, they had driven to South Riveredge, selected every

article, and carried it home in their own baskets. Once that lordly turkey had been scientifically poked and pinched by her and met with approval, she was not going to let it out of her sight "an' have no secon'-rater sont up to de house instid." Mammy had small faith in Northern tradesmen. So to her cabin all had been sent, there to be prepared and cooked by her on "de fines' range in de worl'!" as she confidently believed her own to be, and truly it was a wondrous feast which now stood ready for Charles' serving, the two maids to dart like shuttles between Mammy's cabin and the great house.

It was Hadyn Stuyvesant who with graceful bow offered his arm to Mrs. Carruth, while Homer Forbes turned to the two girls. As she rose to accept Hadyn's arm Mrs. Carruth paused a moment, doubt and indecision in her eyes, and asked:

"Where is Jean?"

"She left the room just a short time ago, mother. Shall I call her?" asked Constance.

"Yes, do, dear. We will wait just a moment for you."

Constance left the room, to return in two minutes with consternation written upon her face.

"Where is she and what—?" asked Mrs. Carruth, resignation to any possibility descending upon her.

"She has just come in, mother, and—and—" the words ended in a laugh as Constance collapsed upon a chair.

"What is it, Connie?" demanded Eleanor. "What has Jean done now?"

"Where's my little sister?" asked Hadyn. "You can't make me believe she has broken all the laws of the Medes and Persians."

"No, not those old fogies, but, oh, dear, what do you suppose she has done?—invited, sans ceremony, Victoria Regina, Mary Stuart, and Adelaide Elizabeth Hodgeson to dine with her!"

"Constance! Never!" cried Mrs. Carruth.

"She has. They are up in her room this

very minute putting the finishing touches to their very unique toilets."

"Go get 'em. Fetch 'em on. We'll entertain 'em right royally! I know that National bird is a bouncer, and big enough to feed a dozen Hodgesons as well as all present," was Hadyn's laughing command.

"Oh, Hadyn, we can't," protested Eleanor, whose dignity and sense of propriety were continually receiving slight jars from this friend of the household.

"Why not? It will be the experience of their lives—an education by practical illustration of manners polite. How can you hesitate, Eleanor? I thought you were a strong advocate of settlement work, and here you are overlooking an opportunity sent to your very door. Who was it I heard talking about 'neglected opportunities' not long since? A most edifying dissertation, if I recollect aright, too."

"I second the motion. Such a zest to a meal may never again be offered. Yes, Mrs. Carruth, you've got it to do. It is clearly a duty

brought to your door," added Homer Forbes. "Moreover, it will give me a wonderful opportunity to pursue my psychological studies. Didn't know I was knee-deep in them, did you, Eleanor? Fact, however. Human emotions as the direct result of unsuspected mental suggestion, etc. Bring on your subjects, Constance."

"I give in. Do as you've a mind to, you incorrigible children, only bear this in mind—you are *not* to tease those girls and make them miserable. Jean has made one wild break, but there shall be no more if I can prevent it. Since she has brought them here, and you *will* dine with them, so be it; but you are not to tease them, you madcap men," was Mrs. Carruth's final dictum.

"Not a tease, not a smile out of order," agreed Hadyn, though his twinkling eyes half belied his words.

"You just watch us entertain 'em," insisted Homer.

"I'll watch, you may be sure of that,"

laughed Mrs. Carruth. "Now fly, Connie, and summon our unexpected guests."

We will pass over the oysters, which were disposed of as never before oysters had been, and the soup, which disappeared audibly. That dinner was a genuine Southern one, and no item was lacking. At length arrived the critical moment when the bird of national fame should have appeared, but—didn't. There was a long, ominous delay. Charles bustled and fussed about, one eye upon his mistress, the other upon the pantry. No one noticed that Jean's conversational powers, never mediocre, were now phenomenal. She talked incessantly and as rapidly as a talking machine, albeit her listeners seemed to offer small encouragement for such a ceaseless flow of language. They sat with their eyes fastened to their plates—plates which would require very little scraping before washing. To and from pantry and dining room vibrated Charles. The vegetables, relishes, jellies—in short, everything to be served with the turkey—was placed

in tempting array upon the sideboard; but still no sign of the festive bird itself, and Charles' perturbation was increasing by the second. As on many another occasion it was Mammy who supplied the climax. At this crucial moment she appeared in the doorway of the pantry, her eyes blazing, her face a thundercloud, as she stammered:

"Miss Jin-n-n-ninny! M-m-iss Jinny! Please, ma'am, fergive me fer 'trudin' in 'pon yo' when yo' is entertainin'; but 'tain't lak dey was strangers, dey's all ob de family, so to speak, ma'am" (Mammy was too excited to notice that the cheeks of two individuals seated at that board had turned a rosy, rosy pink), an' I jes' natchelly *got* to speak ma min' or bus'—"

"Why, Mammy, what has happened?" interrupted Mrs. Carruth, quite aware that Mammy managed to find mares' nests when others were unable to do so, but surprised by this one, nevertheless. Mammy did not often

overstep the lines set by convention; but on this occasion she certainly seemed tottery.

"De bird! De tuckey! It's gone! It's done been stole right out ob ma wamin oven yonder. I done had it all cook to a tu'n, an' set up in ma oven fer ter keep it jes' ter de true livin' p'int ob sarvin', an den I run inter Miss Connie's kitchen fer ter git some ob dem little frilly papers I need fer its laigs, an—an' it mus' 'a' been stole whilst I was in dar, er else de very debbil hisself done fly away wid it right from unner ma nose, kase I ain't been outer dat kitchen one single minnit since—not one!" emphasized Mammy, with a wag of her turbaned head, her talking machine running down simply because her breath had given out.

If poor Mammy had needed anything to further outrage her feelings and put a climax to her very real distress, the roar which at that instant arose from two masculine throats would have been more than enough; but when Homer Forbes turned a reproachful face

toward her and asked, "Mammy Blairsdale, do you mean to tell me that our goose—"

"No, sah! No, sah! de *tuckey!*" corrected Mammy instantly.

"Well, then, our turkey is cooked—"

"Cooked! Cooked! Ef it was only de *cookin'* dat pestered me I wouldn't be pestered," was Mammy's Hibernian reply. "It's done been *stole,* sah! Clean, cl'ar stole out ob ma kitchen."

"Let's go find the thief, Forbes!" cried Hadyn, casting his napkin upon the table and springing to his feet. "Come on. Mammy, whom do you suspect? Which way shall we run? What must we do with him when we overhaul him?"

"Oh, yo' jes' a-projeckin, I knows dat all right, but I tells you dat bird ain' got no ekal in dis town. I done supervise his p'ints masef, an' he's de best to be had. If yo' wants to know who I thinks is got him, I thinks it's a man what done stop at ma door when I was a-stuffin' dat tucky early dis mawnin'. He

was a tromp, an' he ax me fer somethin' ter eat. I ain't ginnerly got no use fer tromps, but dis hyer was de Thanksgivin' mawnin', an' seem lak I couldn't turn him away hungry."

"We'll find him! Come on, Forbes! Where's that stout walking-stick, Mrs. Carruth? Bring along the wheelbarrow for the remains, Charles—of the turkey, I mean."

Haydn was making for the door, Forbes hard upon his heels, when Jean darted to her mother's side to draw her head toward her and whisper something into the listening ear. Jean's guests sat like graven images. Constance and Eleanor were ready to shriek at the absurdity of the situation.

"Hadyn, Homer, come back! Mammy, send in the quail pie and all the other good things you've prepared; we shall not starve. Ladies and gentlemen, circumstances render explanations somewhat embarrassing at this moment. Don't be distressed, Mammy. On with the feast, Charles.

"Why? what? where? who?" were the words which rattled about Mrs. Carruth's ears.

Mammy gave one glance at Jean, who had returned to her seat. She had not been in this family sixty-eight years without arrogating a few prerogatives. Then, but for Mrs. Carruth's upraised hand, Etna would have broken forth. But Jean knew her hour of reckoning would come later. Her conversational powers seemed to have suffered a reaction. Her chair was next Hadyn's. As he returned to his place he bent low, slipped his arm about the subdued little figure, and asked in a tone which it would have been hard to resist:

"Little Sister, what did you do with that turkey?"

"Rolled it in a big towel, put it in a basket, and carried it to the Hodgesons' with mother's Thanksgiving compliments, when I went after the girls. They wouldn't eat a *charity* turkey, but a compliment turkey was different," was

whispered back in a voice suspiciously charged with tears.

"I call you a trump!" Then in a lower tone he turned to Constance, who sat at the other side, and said: "Who gives himself with his gift, serves three."

CHAPTER VII.

Expansion.

The short Thanksgiving holiday ended, Eleanor returned to college and Jean to school, found Constance busier than ever in her kitchen, for the holiday season was her hardest time, and this year promised to be an exceptional one. An extra supply of candy must be made for the booth in the Arcade, as well as for those who sold her candies on commission in other towns. Then, too, an unusual number of private orders had already come in. These all meant incessant work for Constance and Mary Willing.

The first week in December she entered the kitchen where Mary was just cutting into squares great masses of chocolate caramels. She had been hard at work all the morning, and her face was flushed from her exertions.

"Oh, I'm afraid you are nearly done up," cried Constance, contritely. "You have been working so hard ever since eight o'clock, and it is now past eleven. I am so sorry to leave all this work to you while I do the easy part."

"Do you call it easy work to write about two dozen letters, keep track of all the orders which are pouring in now, and run accounts straight?—to say nothing of ordering our supplies. *I* don't, and I'm thanking my lucky stars that I can do *my* share of the work with a big spoon instead of a pen," was Mary's cheerful reply, as she raised her arm to push back from her forehead an unruly lock of hair which fell across her eyes.

"Let me," said Constance quickly, lifting the soft strand into place. "You are all sticky, and when one's hands are sticky that is the time for hair to grow rampant and one's nose to itch? I've been there too many times myself not to know all about it, I tell you. But that isn't what I came downstairs to say! Do you know that this pile of letters

has set me thinking, Mary? If things go on at this rate you and I can never in the world handle the business. Why, it has taken me the whole morning to look after the letters and acknowledge the orders which came by the early mail. I haven't been able to do one single stroke in here, and now I have got to go down to South Riveredge. Charles told Mammy that we ought to have more space there for our goods, and he wished I would see Mr. Porter about it at once. He thinks we ought to rent one of the other spaces for the Christmas season, anyway, and have someone there to attend to it. What do you think? And do you know of someone we could get? You see Christmas is only three weeks off, and whatever we do we've got to do at once."

As Constance talked she wielded a big knife and helped briskly. Mary did not answer at once; her pretty forehead wore a perplexed pucker. At length she said:

"I know a girl who could take charge of it

I think, although I don't know whether you'd like her or not."

Constance smiled as she answered: "Suppose you tell me who she is, then maybe I can tell you whether I like her or not."

"It's Kitty Sniffins. We used to go to school together."

"I don't know her at all, so I'm a poor judge of her qualifications, am I not? But if you think she is the sort of girl we would like to have there, I am sure she needs no other recommendation, Mary. What is her address?"

"Her brother is an insurance agent down on State Street. You might see him. They moved not long ago, and I don't know where they live now."

"Oh——," exclaimed Constance, light beginning to dawn upon her. She had not heard the name Sniffins since the year in which she began her candy-making, as the result of the burning of their home, and the name had not figured very pleasantly in the

experience of that October, or the months which followed. Still, the sister might prove very unlike the brother, and just now time was precious. If she was to act upon Charles' suggestion she must act immediately.

"I think I'll drop her a note in care of her brother; I don't like to go to his office. She can call here," said Constance.

Mary glanced up quickly to ask:

"Is there any reason, Miss Constance, why you would prefer someone else?" for something in Constance's tone made her surmise that for some reason which she failed to comprehend Kitty Sniffins did not meet with her young employer's approval.

"If I have one it is too silly to put into words," laughed Constance, "so I will not let it influence me. I dare say Kitty Sniffins is a right nice girl and will sell enough candy to make me open my eyes. At all events, I'll have a pow-wow with her. But before she can sell candy or anything else she must

have a place to sell it in, and it's up to me to scuttle off to the Arcade as fast as I can go. And, by the way, you've got to have more help here, Mary. Yes, you *have*. You need not shake your head. As matters are shaping I shall have to give every moment of my time to the business of this great and glorious enterprise. Now whom shall I get? What is Fanny doing this fall? She left school in the spring, didn't she?"

"Yes. She is helping mother sew, but——" and an eager light sprang into Mary's eyes. Fanny Willing was a younger sister, a rather delicate girl, who was growing more delicate from the hours spent at work in the close rooms of her home, and running a heavy, old-fashioned sewing machine. She was a plain, quiet little thing, very unlike her striking-looking older sister, and as such had not found favor in her mother's eyes. In her younger days Mrs. Willing had boasted a certain style of beauty, and with it had contrived to win a husband

whom she felt would elevate her to a higher social plane, but her hopes had never been realized. Probably every family has a black sheep; Jim Willing had figured as that unenviable figure in his. It was the old story of the son born after his parents had been married a number of years, and several older sisters were waiting to spoil him; plenty of money to fling about, a wild college career of two years, marriage with a pretty housemaid and—disinheritance. It had required only twenty-three years to bring it all to pass, and the next twenty-three completed the evil. At forty-six Jim Willing looked like a man of fifty-six—so can dissipation and moral degeneration set their seal upon their victims. Gentle blood? What had it done for him? Very little, because he had permitted it to become hopelessly contaminated. And his children?—they were working out the problem of heredity; paying the penalties of an earlier generation; demonstrating the commandment which says, "unto the third and

fourth generation." A cruel, relentless one, but not to be lightly broken.

In Mary was one illustration of it; Fanny another. Each was to "drie her weird," as the Scotch say.

"Do you think your mother can spare her?"

"I'm sure she can. The fact is, Fanny has been trying to get some work in one of the shops in South Riveredge. Sewing doesn't agree with her, somehow; she seems to grow thinner every day; she ain't—*isn't,* I mean—very strong, you see."

"Will you send word to her, Mary? I think this sort of work will be better for her than the sewing, and we'll talk about the salary when she comes over."

"She'll be a mighty lucky girl just to *get* here, salary or *no* salary!" was Mary's positive reply. "If you don't mind I'll run down home this afternoon and tell her to come early to-morrow morning. I'll have all this batch made, and the rest can wait until the

morning; we've got a good lot ahead already." Mary's eagerness manifested itself in her every action, and Constance nodded a cheerful approval as she laid down her big knife and turned to leave the kitchen.

"Go ahead, partner, but I must be off now."

"So the business is expanding?" exclaimed Mr. Porter, heartily, when Constance had explained to him her wish to rent an arch for her Christmas trade. "Good! I knew it would. Couldn't possibly help it with such candy as that to back it up. But mind, you are not to forget my Christmas order in all your bustle and hurry for other people. Twenty pounds——"

"What!" cried Constance, aghast at the recklessness of her oldest customer.

"Now, that will do, young lady. Will you please answer me this! Why must I always be looked upon as a mild sort of lunatic when I give you an order? 'Twas ever thus! Why, you hooted my first order, and

you have kept on hooting every single one since. I wonder I haven't transferred my patronage long since. Trouble is you realize where you have me cornered. You know I can't duplicate those candies anywhere. Now come along with me and let us arrange for the new quarters which are to replace the outgrown ones, and—mark my word—this business will never again contract to the old space. This is where my business acumen shows itself. Once I've got you into the bigger stand, and the rent into my coffers, I mean to keep you there, even if I have to get out and drum up the extra trade to meet the extra outlay. Co-operation."

Constance was too accustomed to this good friend's nonsense to see anything but the deepest interest for her welfare underlying it. She knew that, with all his seeming badinage, he was looking further ahead than she, with her still limited experience, even after four years in her little business world, could look, for her's, while exceptional for

her years and sex, could never match that of this man of the great, active business world. But if Mr. Porter was far-seeing in some directions, in others he was short-sighted, and his range of vision was to be broadened by one who dwelt in a far humbler walk of life—Mammy Blairsdale.

Upon this particular morning Mammy had elected to drive in state to South River-edge, ostensibly to cast a critical eye over the Blairsdale-Devon Lunch Counter, but in reality to convey to it a very special dainty for her pet customer—Hadyn Stuyvesant.

In addition to a few hundred other side issues to her business, Mammy had raised poultry during the previous summer, and, curiously enough, to every chick hatched out, there had pecked themselves into the world about four roosters, until poor Mammy began to believe her setting eggs must have had a spell cast upon them. As the summer advanced such an array of lordly, strutting, squaking young cocks never

dominated a poultry yard, and the sequel was inevitable. When they arrived at the *crowing age* the neighbors arose in revolt! Such a vociferous, discordant collection of birds had never fought and crowed themselves into public notice. Mammy became almost distracted, and was at her wits' end until a diplomatic move struck her: those roosters should win not only fame for themselves, but for their owner also; and not long afterward first one neighbor then another was mollified and highly flattered to receive a fine daintily broiled, fried, or roasted young bird, cooked as only Mammy knew how to cook a fowl, garnished as only Mammy knew how to garnish, and accompanied by a respectful note, *not* written by Mammy, but by Jean, somewhat in th' strain:

"Will Mrs. —— please accept this dish with the most respectful compliments of Mammy Blairsdale, who *hopes* this noisy rooster will never disturb her any more?"

Oh, "sop to Cerberus!" Could diplomacy go further?

It was one of the most vociferous of her flock which now lay upon his lordly back, his legs pathetically turned to the skies, his fighting and his squaking days ended forever, that reposed in Mammy's warming can, to be transferred to Charles' warming oven, there to await Hadyn's arrival.

As Constance and Mr. Porter drew near the lunch counter, Mammy was giving very explicit directions to Charles. Constance and Mr. Porter were too occupied to be aware of her presence; not she of theirs, however.

Mr. Porter conducted Constance to the arch next but one to that in which the lunch counter stood, only separated from it by the cigar stand.

"Now here is a space which you can have as well as not, and it is close enough to Charles for him to cast an eye over it from time to time."

"And may I rent it for one month?" asked Constance.

"Better rent it for one year," urged Mr. Porter. "It's in a mighty good location."

"And *I* call it a mighty *po'* location," broke in an emphatic voice. "A *mighty* po' one, and no kynd ob a place fo' one ob ma chillen fer to be at. *Gobblin* men-folks hyar at de lunch stan'; *smokin'* men-folks at de nex' one; an' we kin bress Gawd ef we don't fin' oursefs wid *guzzlin* men-folks on yonder at de tother side befo' long."

"Now, now! Hold on, Mammy! Go slow," broke in Mr. Porter, laughingly. "You know the Arcade doesn't stand for *that* sort of thing. Don't hit us so hard."

"How I gwine know what it boun' ter stan' fer if *it* lak ter stan' fer lettin' dat chile rint a counter nex' door to a segar stan'?" snapped Mammy, her eyes fixed upon the luckless superintendent, personifying the strongly emphasized *it*."

"Well, it's lucky we found you here. Now,

we never took *that* side of the question into consideration, did we, little girl? Yes, I guess Mammy's judgment beats ours. Great head! So come on, Mammy, and let us have your sound advice in this choice of bigger quarters for Miss Constance. You see, *I* predict that she will never return to the smaller ones again."

"Don't need no gre't secon'-sight fer ter make *dat* out, I reckon," was the superior retort.

Mr. Porter looked crushed and then dropped behind Mammy, who went sailing majestically down the Arcade, to stop at the very first and most pretentious of all the Arches—one which had been rented until very recently by a stationer, who had profited so handsomely that he had built a large shop not far from the Arcade, and now wished to sub-let this arch until his lease expired. Next to it was a florist's stand, and opposite a stationer's, each of a very high order. Constance stood aghast at Mammy's audacity.

"Why, Mammy, this is the highest-priced arch in the Arcade," she exclaimed.

"Well, what *dat* got ter do wid it, Baby? Ain't your candy *de highest-priced candy? An' ain' you de very high-water mark quality?* Who gwine ter 'spute dat? Go 'long an' rint yo' place; yo' all matches p'intedly," and with this speech Mammy stalked back to her own quarters.

Constance gave one look at Mr. Porter, then sank upon one of the little benches within the arch.

"By George, she's right and I'm a blockhead! Think I'd better turn over my job to her and go down into the engine-room until I learn to read human nature as *she* can. Yes, it is the finest, highest-priced arch in the building, but it didn't take that old black woman five seconds to discover the match for it."

"But, Mr. Porter," protested Constance, "of all the extravagant steps, and for Mammy, above all others, to urge it. That conservative creature! And the way she expressed

it! *Why* was I born a Blairsdale? It will shorten my years, I know, to have to live up to the name," and Constance broke into a merry laugh.

"Perhaps the burden will be lifted before long, and such a calamity to your friends averted," answered Mr. Porter, soberly, but with twinkling eyes. The one o'clock whistle had just blown in a building hard by, and the Arcade's elevator was beginning to bring down the people from the floors above. Among them was Hadyn Stuyvesant, who went at once to the luncheon counter, quite unaware of the presence of a certain little lady near the entrance of the Arcade; but her back was toward the elevator. For one second she glanced at Mr. Porter entirely innocent of the purport of his words. Then, catching sight of the mischievous eyes twinkling at her, she rose suddenly to her feet, saying: "Come at once and let me learn what this rash step will cost me."

With a low laugh Mr. Porter strode toward his office beside a very rosy-cheeked young girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

Vaulting Ambitions.

In the course of a few days Constance's new quarters in the Arcade were in operation, for Mr. Porter lost no time in fitting up Arch Number One. The little booth beneath the stairs was dismantled to furnish forth the new one. Down at the kitchen Mary and her sister Fanny, who had come to assist in the work, were doing their best to keep abreast of the orders pouring in with each mail, while Mrs. Carruth, her ambitions at length achieved, was attending to the correspondence, since Constance's time must for a little while be given to the new booth. She had not received a reply to her letter to Kitty Sniffins, and for the time being was too occupied with the demands of the new booth to take further steps in the matter. Indeed, she

had about made up her mind to look for someone else, once order was brought out of the confusion of moving and settling, for some indefinable instinct caused her to feel an aversion to engaging Kitty Sniffins. Had she been asked to state why, she would have found it difficult to put her objection into actual words, and more than once she reproached herself for entertaining it at all. Nevertheless, she could not free herself from it, but was too busy just then to dwell upon it. In the course of a few days everything would be settled and in running order; and meanwhile she, herself, would go to the Arcade each day where, with Charles as her Majordomo, body-guard and faithful friend, she was a veritable queen of her little realm, and woe betide the individual so reckless as to forget that he or she was in the presence of a Blairsdale.

The pretty Arch had been in perfect running order for one week when Constance began to cast about for someone to take her

place, since neither she herself, nor her family felt content to have her make the journey to and from South Riveredge each day, or to spend her time at the Arch. On the previous Saturday she had put a carefully-worded advertisement in the *Riveredge Times,* the answers to be sent to Arch No. 1, Arcade Building; and upon her arrival at her Arch on this Monday morning she found dozens of letters from girls, and even men, asking employment. She was reading one of the letters when a shadow fell across the page, and raising her eyes she saw a young man standing at the counter. Thinking he had come to purchase a box of candy, she rose from her chair and stood waiting for him to make his wants known to her. Instead of doing so, he raised his hat, and with a most impressive bend of his long, loosely-hung figure, and a smile which irritated her by its self-complacency, said:

"How are you, Miss Carruth? You're sure putting up a big show here, ain't you?"

"What can I do for you?" asked Constance, with quiet dignity.

"Guess you can't do nothing for *me*, but maybe I can do something for *you*. Candy ain't in my line. Never spent none o' my solid cash for the stuff, but I'm glad other people do; plenty of fools in this world to help wise folks get rich, ain't there?"

"Will you please state your business?" and Constance took up another letter as a hint to her unwelcome visitor that her time, if not his, was of some value.

"Got a pile o' answers, ain't you? That's just what I thought, and it's just what brought me down here this early. This letter come for Kitty in my care 'most a week ago, but she's down in the city doin' somethin' or 'nother; don't 'mount to much, I guess, though. I knew she hadn't no friends up yonder in swell Riveredge, and when I saw your ad. in the *Riveredge Times* it didn't take me no time to put two and two together. Oh, I'm fly, I am! I knowed—*knew*—the

postmark meant something about that candy kitchen, 'cause Mary Willing and Kit used to be school pals, and I guessed you was a-lookin' for more help, and I don't often guess wrong, neither. I sent a telegraph to Kit to come on home this mornin' to see you, but I weren't goin' to take any chances, so I come right up to clench the job for her."

"Then I assume that you are Miss Sniffins' brother. May I ask why you felt so sure that the letter sent to your care was from me, or had anything to do with my need of more help in this business?"

The smile and wink which prefaced his reply nearly proved the last straw. Quietly reaching below the counter, Constance pressed an electric button. She had been wise beyond her years when she had this connection made between her Arch and Charles' counter. Sniffins did not notice the motion.

"Well, you see, I'm boss in my own house and run the wimmin-folks. When I suspic-

ioned what the letter was, I just took French leave, so to speak, and opened and read it——"

"What!" The indignation in Constance's tone was a trifle disconcerting even to the thick-skinned Sniffins, and he had the grace to color slightly. But it was only momentary. He rarely forgot Sniffins.

"Oh, that's all O. K. All in the family, you see. Kit won't dare kick; she ain't the kickin' kind—not with *me*, anyhow. She knows too well which side her bread's buttered to kick. *I'm* the head of things down yonder in our house, and as long as I can earn the pile and put up the cash for 'em Ma and Kit can toe the mark. But I don't see no reason why they shouldn't add some to the pile. We ain't, so-to-speak, *rich* yet, but we ain't *poor;* oh, no-siree, we ain't poor. That savings bank next door knows we ain't poor no more, and it knows we're goin' to be——"

"Yes, Charles, I need you," interrupted Constance, for unobserved by her visitor old

Charles had drawn near, and now stood just behind Sniffins, and had heard a good portion of his senseless boasting.

"Yas, Mist'ess, I's right hyer fer ter sarve yo'."

Sniffins turned quickly.

"Hello, old stager, where did you come from?"

Charles paid no more attention to him than he would have paid to a stray dog—not as much.

"Will you please remain at the counter a few moments, Charles. "When your sister returns she may call here to see me, Mr. Sniffins. Good-morning." And without another glance at the man Constance walked quickly away from the counter, and down to the 'phone booth, where she called a number. Sniffins' eyes followed her. When she disappeared he turned to Charles and, with an unpleasant sneer, remarked: "Workin' for her livin' an' tryin' ter play the big-bug, too, ain't she?"

"Does yo' wish fer ter purchase some of dis hyer candy, sah?" asked Charles, icily.

"No, I don't, an' if I did I ain't takin' it from niggers."

"No, sah, I don' reckon yo' is, kase—Mor'in', Massa Po'tah, I'se right glad fer ter see a *gemmen*, sah. Dey's mighty skurse sometimes. How kin I sarve yo', sah?"

"Morning, Charles. Where is my little girl this morning? Gone to the telephone booth? Be back pretty quick, won't she? I want to speak to her a moment."

"She'll return, sah, when de air's better fer her ter breve; it got sort o' foul-like, an' if you'se no objections I'se gwine raise de winder jist a trifle."

"Do, by all means. Must keep the air pure and sweet for that little lady."

"Yas, sir: Yas, sir: Dat's percis'ly what I's amin' ter do. *Dat's* why I'se always on han'."

"Good! We'll watch out for her, won't we? Hello, Sniffins. How about that big

deal you were going to put through for me? I haven't heard much about it lately."

"Oh, you'll hear from that all right, all right. Trouble is you expect a man to do in two weeks somethin'. most men needs two months to do."

"Well if *you* take two months to settle that matter for me, the other fellow, *who can* do it in two weeks, will win out, you mark my word. So you'd better not take time to buy candy at ten A. M. on Monday mornings," for in some way Mr. Porter had gathered from Charles the true situation, and had given this broad hint. Sniffins was not given to taking hints, but he dared not go counter to Mr. Porter's implied wish that he leave the Candy Arch. Still, he was bound to have his last shot, and, with what he intended to be a telling glance, he said:

"You tell Miss Carruth that my sister will take that position, and I'll call 'round later to arrange about her salary."

"It will not be necessary for you to do so,

Mr. Sniffins; I have just 'phoned to someone else." Constance had returned so quietly that no one was aware of her approach.

"How do you do, Mr. Porter? I am glad to see you. What can I do for you? Come into my sanctum."

She led the way to the rear of the Arch, where a little inclosure held her desk and two chairs. Sniffins turned to leave the Arch. At the entrance he came face to face with Hadyn Stuyvesant. The look which accompanied the nod Sniffins gave him was not pleasant. Hadyn did not know him at all, and looked at him in surprise, believing him to have mistaken him for someone else. But Sniffins knew Hadyn.

"So *he's* on there, too, is he? Guess he can see through a millstone most as far as other folks can. If that girl keeps on she's goin' to be rich, *rich*. That business has growed—ah, grown—like a—a—well, it's *grown*. 'For' long she's goin' to have a big thing in it. Wake up, Sniffins, my boy. You're got as

good a chance as any other fellow, an' you're no slouch on looks, neither. Get busy and spruce up more'n ever. Buy some new clothes, old man; you'll find 'em a good investment, I tell you. Get Kit down there *somehow;* that's your best wedge for gettin, into the swell set up yonder. Kit's half-way good-lookin', and ain't got the spunk of a mouse to do any way except the way *I* tell her."

By the time this monologue came to an end Sniffins had turned into his office on State Street, and there found his sister awaiting him. She had returned to South Riveredge nearly frightened to death by his telegram.

"Ah, cut it out! What's the use whooping things up for nothing?" was his short ordering. "Nobody's dead nor dyin', but I want you to get down to the Arcade and *get this job,* see? Don't come back here whinin' that you *can't.* You're *got* to get it, or you can dust out o' South Riveredge an' your happy

home. Now listen to what I'm tellin' you: Don't you let on *who* you *are*. If you do the jig's up, for that high and mighty sprig down there ain't got no sort o' use for *me*. But I'll *tame* her. I ain't seen the girl yet I couldn't tame. But I want you there 'cause I want to keep track of the revenue, do you see? and if your head's worth half a muttonhead you can't *help* gettin' a good idea of what that business is worth, and that's what I mean to know. She don't know you from a hole in the ground, and you ain't goin' to let her——"

"But she will know my name, Lige."

"How will she know your name if you don't *tell* her your name? You've got a middle name, ain't you? Well, what's the matter with that? Katherine Boggs is all right, ain't it? You haven't *got* to tack on the Sniffins."

"Oh, I'd forget, and people would know me, and I'd be scared to death to do it, Lige."

"Now see here: You'll be scared to death

if you *don't* do it, let me tell you, for I'll scare you myself. Now get down there and do the job right up to the mark."

About half an hour later a sweet-faced, timid girl presented herself at Constance's Arch. She seemed unduly agitated, and her hands trembled as she rested them on the counter, to ask if Miss Carruth was to be seen.

"I think she can be," answered Constance, smiling encouragingly at the perturbed little figure before her, for Constance was too much her mother's child not to feel the deepest sympathy for such a girl.

"Is she in?" ventured her visitor.

"I am Miss Carruth. What can I do for you?"

"Oh! Why, you want a girl, a clerk?"

"I do. Come into my little office; no one will interrupt us there. Sit down; you seem tired. Now tell me all about it. I've had such a pile of letters that I hardly know which to answer. By the way, I have just 'phoned to

one who gave me her number but not her name. I asked her to call at once. I wonder if you can be No. 795?" Constance paused with a most encouraging smile upon her lips and light in her eyes.

"Yes—oh—no; I mean——"

"Why are you so nervous? It will not be a very difficult undertaking, I'm sure, just to sit here and sell boxes of candy, and I'm not *half* as formidable a young woman as you must have pictured me. The hours are not so very long, and there will be a good many spare moments. The salary is seven dollars a week. Do you care to consider it, Miss——?"

"S—Boggs, I mean Miss Boggs. Yes, I'll take it, I want it very much, I'll try to please you——"

Constance looked at the girl. What ailed her? Why this feverish eagerness to secure the position, and why a degree of nervousness which almost amounted to a panic?

"Will you please give me your address?

And"—Constance hesitated. She was upon the point of asking for references, but sympathy for the girl withheld her from doing so.

The girl gave an address in a distant part of the town, and rose to go. Constance's look held her. There was nothing alarming in the quiet gaze of those deep brown eyes; on the contrary, it was soothing, if compelling.

"Do you mind telling me why you are so agitated? I can see no cause for it, yet there may be one which I do not guess, and if I can help remove it I shall be glad to do so. It troubles me to see you disturbed. Perhaps a good deal depends upon your securing a situation at once, and if that is the cause of your trouble we have removed it, haven't we? for you are already engaged."

"Oh, yes, I know I'm very foolish; I do want the situation; I've *got* to take it; I'll do my very, very best; I truly will. Please excuse me. When must I come?"

"Can you come this afternoon? I am very anxious to get back to my duties in my candy kitchen, and if you can arrange to come here after luncheon, I shall have time to show you the little things you would like to learn, and to-morrow morning you can get along without me."

"Yes, I'll come. I'll be here at two o'clock, and I'll try so hard to please you, Miss Carruth." For a moment a smile lighted up the girl's face and quite transformed it.

She was a plain, colorless little thing, but something in her smile made her very attractive.

"I shall be here. Good-bye for a couple of hours."

The girl hurried away.

"Well, if she isn't one of the oddest little creatures I've ever come across. I am sure I don't know what impelled me to engage her, for I dare say I could

have found a dozen others much better qualified to attend to things here, but—somehow—well, I dare say, there's a lot of mother in me, and when our sympathies are aroused we sometimes do queer things."

Constance was not conscious of having spoken aloud, as she moved about the Arch arranging and giving a touch here and there, until a laughing voice asked:

"What is this I'm listening to? A budding elocutionist practicing her monologue?"

"Does sound a little like it, doesn't it? but it's nothing half so brilliant. In fact, you might suspect me of bordering on mental aberration instead if I told you, so I reckon I won't. But I am starved even if you are not. Let us go see what Blairsdale *and* Devon have to offer to-day."

A moment later Constance and Hadyn Stuyvesant were seated in the little screened-off corner back of Charles' counter, his

duties transferred to his satellite, as he laid before his young mistress, and the one whom in his faithful old heart he had long cherished a wish to call his "Young Massa," the dainties especially prepared for them by Mammy.

CHAPTER IX.

At Merry Yuletide.

"Hurry, Eleanor. We are all waiting for you," called Constance from the terrace, where a group of young people stood waiting for the tardy one.

It was the day following Christmas, and such a day as long dwells in one's memory of perfect winter days; scarcely a cloud in the sky, and the air filled with a crispness which set one's blood a-tingle. The world wore her white robes of the season, bedecked with a thousand sparkling jewels. The river was frozen nearly across, and on its glistening surface groups of skaters darted about, or pushed ice-chairs, in which were seated older or less vigorous bodies for whom skating was not.

Early in December, when the weather had turned unusually cold for the season, the

river had commenced to freeze over. It had been thirty years since such heavy ice had formed, and those who recalled that time predicted that the present cold snap would hold as that one had held, and the New Year find, as it had then found, the sleighs crossing to the opposite shore.

Eleanor Carruth had returned from college three days before Christmas, to find everyone in the liveliest, gayest mood, and each moment crowded to its very limit with duties or pleasures. Christmas in Mrs. Carruth's home had always been a day of "good will toward man" in its truest, sweetest sense. No one had time to think of self in her desire to think of others. For more than sixty years Mammy's voice had been the first one to cry "Christmas gif' " to her children, as she went from bed to bed in the chill Christmas dawn. Try as they might in bygone years, none of the other servants on the old plantation had been able to creep up to the bedchambers before her, and now in the

newer life of the Northern world, to which she had followed those she loved, she had never missed her greeting. In the dark, difficult days when resources were limited and every penny had to be so carefully expended, the Christmas gifts had been very simple little remembrances interchanged, but old Mammy had invariably managed to have *some* trifle for her "chillen," and they would sooner have gone without their own than have failed to have their token of the season lying at her door on Christmas morning.

But happier days had now dawned for all, and the Christmas day just passed had been a red-letter one for the family. True, Eleanor's resources were not yet equal to Constance's. Eleanor's spending money was derived from the source which, prior to her entrance in college, had caused Mammy such deep concern. Eleanor still coached a number of the less brilliant lights of the college. In this way she felt more independent of her aunt and less dependent upon Constance.

Constance protested and scolded, declaring that it was perfect nonsense for Eleanor to so burden herself, since the candy kitchen was more than equal to the demands made upon it. But Eleanor was a Carruth.

As the party stood waiting for her, Jean, keeping fast hold of Haydn's hand and jigging up and down in her impatience to be off, Forbes talking to one of Eleanor's friends, and the others all chatting at once, Eleanor came hurrying from the house, carrying in her hand a pair of shining skates, and carefully tucked under her arm a *broom*.

Haydn was the first to spy it. His eyes began to twinkle, and he quickly slipped over to Constance's side.

"Is this a very mid-winter madness?" he asked under his breath.

Constance glanced up quickly. Her eyes instantly caught the twinkle, and darted toward Forbes, who was too deeply engaged in trying to prove to his rather skeptical listener that the soft little wraith-like clouds beginning to

gather overhead meant wind, and perhaps more snow also, within twenty-four hours, to be aware of Eleanor's unusual departure in the line of impedimenta. Neither Constance nor Hadyn intended to spoil the joke by jogging their wits, and the others who were alive to the fun preferred to see it to the end.

Eleanor hurried up to Forbes and said, as though to confirm his argument:

"Yes, it *is* clouding over, isn't it? Mammy says it is going to snow and urged me to carry this umbrella. I can always trust Mammy's "bones," she ended as she held forth the broom to the bewildered man, who looked from her face to it as though questioning her sanity.

Then Eleanor wakened.

"Oh, why—I thought—why, how did I get this?"

"Let me relieve you of your strange burden, Eleanor. Still want an umbrella? I'll fetch one if you say so, but you may find the broom more useful, on second thought. Let's take it along to clear away the light snow which fell

last night. Come on, people! If we expect to get up an appetite for Mammy's luncheon at two o'clock, we'd best make a move toward the river," cried Hadyn, leading the way with the broom shouldered like a musket, and Jean in full prance beside him.

It was a merry party which gathered upon the crystal surface of the river that morning. For many days Jack Frost had been busy, and had done his wonderful work most effectively, completing it during the previous night by a light coating of diamond-dust, which glistened and sparkled in the clear sunshine, or swirled up in fantastic spirals as the skaters whirled away through it. The boathouse at the river's edge served as a shelter for the chilled ones, and, far-sighted woman! Mammy had sent Charles down there with a great basket of sandwiches, and a heaterful of steaming chocolate. Somehow nature had made a big mistake when she fashioned Mammy: she should have formed a man, a *white* man, and cast his lot among the great commerical lights of his day.

The chocolate heater had to be replenished more than once, and the manner in which the sandwiches vanished was almost miraculous.

Eleanor, Constance and Jean were as much at home upon their skates as upon the soles of their feet, and Hadyn had skated ever since he could move without assistance; but Forbes had acquired the art during a winter spent in Northern Europe, and at a date not so remote as to have lessened the novelty of the experience. He had brought with him from Holland a pair of skates of truly remarkable design, and it was upon these "ice boats," as Hadyn instantly dubbed them, that he was now demonstrating the extraordinary agility of the Dutch skaters.

"Stand off! Make way!" cried Hadyn, as Forbes, one arm about Eleanor's waist and the other holding her hand aloft in what he fondly believed to be a perfect imitation of the Dutch peasants' graceful poise and motion, bore down upon the party, his long, upturned skates and still longer legs causing Eleanor to cast skittish

glances in their direction as she swung along beside him.

"Great! How do you do it, old man?" asked Hadyn as Eleanor was almost hurled into his arms, Forbes' momentum carrying him on and past them like a runaway motor-car.

"Simplest thing in the world! Be back in a second to show you how. Nothing like it! Absolutely—" but he was carried beyond his hearers, whose eyes followed his wild evolutions with more or less apprehension for "what next?" since it seemed contrary to all laws of gravitation for any human being to maintain his equilibrium very long if he took such chances.

"He has turned! He's coming back! Now watch out, Hadyn, and learn how it's done," laughed Constance, as this skated "Ichabod Crane" bore down upon them, hair blown on end, arms flying, legs cutting capers legs never before had cut, and upon his face the expression of "do or die, man, for *she* is watching you."

"Gee, what a swathe he cuts!" cried another man, as the light snow lying upon the ice flew from beneath the rushing skates.

"Now watch out! Clear the track! Look sharp, and you'll all catch the knack of it without half trying. Nothing easier," shouted the skater as he drew nearer, pride in his eyes, glory descending upon him. But alack! it's said 'a haughty spirit goeth before a fall.' There *may* have been an ice fissure. Forbes insisted there *was* one in which he caught his skate; but there certainly *was* the fall both actual and figurative. As the enthusiast came within ten feet of his spellbound audience, a pair of very long legs came up, and a very loosely-hung body came down with dispatch. The legs flew apart until the figure resembled an ice-boat under full headway, nor did its momentum perceptibly lessen as it sped past its audience, the light snow piling up in front of it and flying over its shoulders as it flies back from a snow-plow. For fully thirty feet the wild figure slid along before it lost its im-

petus. Then it came to a dazed stop. Only one of the audience was prepared to go to its aid; the others were entirely helpless, and were hanging upon each other's necks—let us hope in tears of sympathy.

"Can—can I help you?" stammered Hadyn, as he bent over to raise the prone one. "You—you rather came a cropper that time, and—and—"

"Get behind me, for heaven's sake. Do you think a man can slither along on the ice for thirty feet and—and not damage his garments? Quick, before all those people get wise. Is your long cape in the boathouse? Yes? Thanks, I'll take it, and I don't care a hang if *you freeze;*" and scrambling to his feet Forbes sped for the boathouse, and the world saw him not again that day.

Scarcely had Forbes left the party on the pond when a new member was added to it, or, at least, arrived upon the scene with a very firmly fixed intention of being added to it if he could contrive to be.

He was arrayed, from his standpoint of a proper toilet for the occasion, in a costume altogether irresistible, and which it had cost him no little time and outlay to procure.

Heavy tan shoes, a plaided Scotch tweed suit, a sweater of gorgeous red, and a sealskin cap.

With many a curve and flourish, for the man *could* skate, he came up to the group, and with a most impressive bow to Constance, raised the fur cap, and, standing uncovered, said:

"Good-morning, Miss Carruth. Fine sport, ain't it? May I compliment you on your skating? You ain't got a rival on the ice, nor off it, neither."

For a moment Constance was at a loss to place the man, then she recalled his visit to her Candy Arch about three weeks before. It was Elijah Sniffins.

The very audacity of this move deprived her of speech for a moment, and the others with her were too amazed to come to her res-

cue. Indeed, they did not know the man at all, and, consequently, did not realize the extent of his presumption.

Then Constance came to herself. Looking straight into the man's eyes, her own ominous with indignation, and her cheeks flushing with resentment, she replied:

"Haven't you made a slight mistake, Mr. Sniffins? I believe the business matter upon which you called at the Arcade was settled then and there, for I had already made other arrangements. I hardly think there is anything more to be discussed."

"Oh, that's all in the sweet bygones. You needn't think I've got to talk business every time we meet any mor'n you have; I just give myself a holiday once in so often just like you do, and this is one of 'em. Great day for a holiday. But, by the way, did you get a nice girl for your counter?—one that's goin' to have some snap to her and do a rushin' business with all the young folks anxious to get rid of their money?"

"She is quite satisfactory, thank you, and good-morning, Mr. Sniffins."

"Oh, I say, won't you give me just one turn? Never see anyone could skate like you—"

"Hadyn, isn't it about time we went home? Just one more spin, please," and turning toward Hadyn Stuyvesant Constance held out both hands toward him. He had turned to speak to another member of the party, and until that moment had not been aware of Sniffins' intrusion. At sight of Constance's face his own changed, and he gave a quick glance at the man, who seemed undecided as to whether it would be wiser to accept his dismissal or persist in his unwelcome attentions. It may have been something in Hadyn's glance which deterred him, for with another impressive bow he skated rapidly away, muttering:

"Little snob! Thinks she's out of sight; but she ain't any better'n others who are makin' their pile, and I'll learn her yet."

"Who is he? What is the matter, little

girl?" asked Hadyn, as he and Constance swung away over the ice.

"Why, it's that odious man. I don't know what to make of him. This is the second time he has forced himself upon me, and why he does so is more than I can fathom. He is the Fire Insurance Agent down in State Street; and the only time we have ever had any intercourse whatsoever with him was when the house burned. But *I* did not see him even then. Mother or Mammy were the only ones who had any dealings with him at that time, though once later, when the Candy Booth in the Arcade caught fire, he did speak to me, now I remember, though I had quite forgotten it. What in this world can the man want? I declare he half frightens me, he is so audacious."

She then told Hadyn of Sniffins' visit to the Arcade. He listened attentively, seeing far more in it than the girl beside him guessed, but taking care not to let her know.

"And you did not engage his sister, after all?" he inquired.

"No; I have a Katherine Boggs doing duty there. She's a quiet, nice little thing, and not likely to do the 'rushin' business with all the young fools,' which this idiot seems to think a requisite qualification. Ugh! How I loathe the very sight of that man! It's mighty lucky I did not engage his sister, isn't it? He would have used her as a wedge to force his presence upon me, though why on earth he wishes to is more than I can understand."

The face she turned up to Hadyn's was the very personification of sweetness and modesty.

He looked at her, a slight color creeping into his own and a light filling his eyes, which for the first time since she had known him sent an odd little thrill to the girl's heart, which caused it to beat a trifle quicker, and her eyes to fall before his. It was all over in a moment, and all he said was:

"Keep your modesty, little girl. It is a valuable asset to womanhood. And now we must get back home, or the little Mother and Mammy will get after us."

CHAPTER X.

"Then Came the Wild Weather."

January and February, blustery, wild months, crept slowly away, and March, still more blustery, came in. The cold and dampness told upon poor old Charles, and more than one day found him a fast prisoner in the "baid," which, in spite of Mammy's conviction "dat it fair hit de sore spots," frequently failed to find Charles', and only served to smother his groans. Then one day, when, in spite of his spouse's protests, he insisted upon going to the Arcade in a driving snowstorm, the climax was reached, and when Charles reached his little cabin at nightfall he was "cl'ar beat out an' ready fer ter drap," as Mammy told Mrs. Carruth. The next day he was downright ill, and a physician had to be summoned.

"Seem lak, seem lak de very ol' boy hisself done got inter dat man," scolded Mammy, her wrath the outcome of nervous irritation, for

Charles was the pride and the love of her life. "No matter how I is ter argify wid him, he just natcherly boun' ter go 'long ter dat Arcyde yistiddy, an' now see what done come of it! Gawd bress ma soul, I reckons I'd smack him good ef he warn't lyin' dar groanin' so wid his misery dat he lak 'nough wouldn't feel de smacks I give him. Tch! tch!" and Mammy shook her head ominously.

"Poor Charles! I'll go right out to the cabin, Mammy, and sit with him while you look after your cooking; it's too bad, too bad; but I think he will soon be about again."

"Yes, an' ef yo' goes out in dis hyar blizzardy weather I'll have two sick folks on my han's 'stid o' one. Now, see here, Miss Jinny, yo' min' me an' stay indoors! Yo' hear me?"

"Nonsense, Mammy. Do you think I shall take cold by walking from here to your cabin? How foolish," protested Mrs. Carruth. "Your luncheon counter cannot be neglected, and with but one pair of hands how can you do your cooking and nurse Charles, too?"

As she spoke Mrs. Carruth tied a scarf over her head and wrapped a long, heavy cloak about her, Mammy never for a second ceasing to protest.

"Now come, Mammy," she said, leading the way to the back door, Mammy following and scolding every step of the way. As they opened the door leading to the back porch they were assailed by a gust of wind and a whirl of snow which blinded them, and at the same time nearly carried them off their feet.

"Mighty man! Go 'long back, Miss Jinny! Go back! Dis hyar ain't no fittin' place fer yo', I tells yo'," gasped Mammy, turning to bar Mrs. Carruth's progress, for even Mammy's weight was as a straw against the gale which swept around the corner of the porch. But slight as she was, Mrs. Carruth was not to be overborne. For a moment she laid hold of the porch railing to steady herself, then with a firm hold upon her flapping cloak braced herself against the wind, and started for the cottage. Mammy was for once silenced, simply

because the words were swept from her lips as soon as she tried to form them.

Earlier in the morning an attempt had been made to clear a path to the cottage; but in such a wild, howling blizzard a half hour was more than enough to set man's work at naught, and Mrs. Carruth and Mammy had to flounder through the snowdrifts as best they could, and were breathless when they reached the bottom of the garden.

"Fo' Gawd's sake, come unner de lee ob de house 'fore yo' is blown daid unner ma eyes, honey," panted Mammy. "Oh, why for is we ever come ter sech a place fer ter live! We all gwine be froz daid 'fore we kin draw our brefs. Come in de house, Miss Jinny, come in," and, half dragging, half carrying her mistress, Mammy led her into the cabin where the little darkey, Mammy's handmaiden, stood with her eyes nearly popping out of her head with fright, for she had been watching them from the safe shelter of the kitchen.

Mrs. Carruth dropped upon a chair well-nigh

exhausted, for even though the cabin was barely two hundred feet from the house, it had required all the strength she could summon to battle her way to it in the force and smother of the blizzard.

"Why—why, I'd no idea it was so terrible," she panted. "I've never known such a storm."

"Ain't I tell yo' so? Ain't I tell yo' not ter come out in it? An' how I is ter git yo' back ter de house is mo'n I kin tell," deplored Mammy, as she hastily divested herself of her own wrappings and then turned to remove her mistress'.

"Yo' foots is soppin', soakin' wet. Yo' mought as well not 'a' had no rubbers on 'em, fer yo' is wet ter de knees. Hyer, you no 'count Mirandy, get me some hot water, an' den hike upstairs fo' de bottle ob alcohol, yo' hyer me!" stormed Mammy, relieved to find someone to vent her irritation upon. "An' yo' ain't gwine back ter dat house whilst dis storm is ragin', let me tell yo'."

"I am all right, Mammy; this is mere folly.

I shall be as dry as a bone in just a few minutes," protested Mrs. Carruth.

"Yis! Yis! An' lak enough chilled to de bone, too. Now, yo' min' what I tells you," and, in spite of their protests, Mrs. Carruth was presently rubbed and warmed into dry garments and comfort. It was well Constance's Candy Kitchen communicated with Mammy's quarters, and that a supply of clothing was always kept in it. It was deserted this morning, for Mary and Fanny had gone home on the previous Saturday afternoon, and the storm had made it impossible for them to return. A large supply of candy had been sent to the Arcade on Saturday morning; so even if customers were courageous enough to face the blizzard in quest of sweets there would be no lack of of sweets to please the sweet tooth, and Constance was glad of the respite the storm gave her, for, like many another busy little business woman, she found many things to attend to in the house when she could steal the time from her regular duties.

This morning she was busy with a dozen little odd bits of work, while Jean, school impossible in such weather, was lost to all the outer world in a new book.

When Mrs. Carruth was made comfortable she went upstairs to Charles. She found him in a sorry plight, and saw at once that poor old Charles was in a more serious condition than Mammy realized, troubled as she was about him; but this was carefully concealed from the old woman.

"We have both to take our scolding now," she said as she seated herself near him. "Mammy will never forgive either of us for disobeying her, Charles. But what can I do for you?"

Charles was too stiff and full of pain to move, but he tried to smile bravely as he answered:

"Reckons we'd better a-minded her, Honey. Reckons we had. She's a mighty pert 'oman, she is, an' when she say do, we better *do*, an' when she say don't, we better *don't*, dat's suah.

An' jes' look at me! Hyar I layin' lak I tied han' an' foot, an' de bis'ness down yonder gwine ter rack an' ruin, lak 'nough, wid dat no 'count boy a-runnin' it. And Charles groaned in tribulation of spirit.

"Wait a moment; I'll see that all goes well down there," answered Mrs. Carruth, soothingly, and slipping away from the room she went into the deserted Bee-hive to 'phone to the Arcade. After considerable delay she got Mr. Porter and told him the situation. He was all interest, and begged her to tell Charles that if necessary he himself would mount guard over the luncheon counter. She next called Hadyn, and asked him to let her know how all went at the candy booth. He assured her that all was well, but that business did not seem to be flourishing.

"Will you please tell Miss Boggs to close it for the day and to go home at once, Hadyn? The storm grows worse every moment, I believe, and if she remains there any longer she may not be able to get home."

"I'll tell her, and I'll see that she gets home, too. Don't worry, little mother. I'll be down a little later to see how you all fare."

"Oh, no! No! Don't try to come. We are all right, and you must not try to drive here in this awful storm. Promise me that you won't, Hadyn."

"Can't make rash promises, and Comet has breasted even worse storms than this," was the laughing answer. "Who is looking after your furnace, now that Charles is down and out?"

"Mr. Henry's man. He was here this morning, and will be back this evening. We lack nothing, and we don't want you under *any* circumstances. Please, say you won't try to come."

"Not unless——" Then there was a whirr and one or two disconnected words and the connection broke short off. No wires could long withstand the weight of ice and snow and the force of wind wrenching at them. Mrs. Carruth tried again and again to get the connection, but all to no purpose, and with a

strange apprehension in her heart she returned to Charles' bedside to reassure him regarding his luncheon counter.

At noon the doctor called to see Charles, and during Mammy's absence from the room Mrs. Carruth contrived to have a word with him.

"He's a pretty old man, and took big chances yesterday. If it were only the rheumatism I had to contend with, I should not feel the least concern for him. That is painful, I know, but not dangerous, as it has settled in his limbs; but I don't like this temperature and breathing. Yet I dare say, if I use a stethoscope, he will think he is a dead man already. These colored people are difficult patients to handle, what with their ignorance and their emotional temperaments they are far worse than children, for we can compel children to do as we think best."

Mrs. Carruth smiled. "You do not know the ante-bellum negro," she said.

"Maybe I do not, but I know the post-bellum, I can tell you, and I've very little use for them."

"Do you wish to examine Charles?" she asked, quietly.

"If he had been a white man, I should have done so last night when I was first called to attend him; but I came near being mobbed the last time I tried to use a stethoscope on a negro patient. The family thought I was about to remove the woman's lungs, I believe."

"Charles, I wish Dr. Black to examine you very thoroughly while he is here—as thoroughly as if he were treating me. There is nothing to alarm you; but we cannot treat you understandingly unless he learns exactly where the greatest difficulty lies."

"Wha' he gwine do to me?" asked Charles, his eyes opening wide.

"Examine your lungs and heart to see if they are sound and strong."

"He gwine cut me wide open?" cried the old man.

Just then Mammy entered. It was well she did. "Luty, Luty, dat man gwine projec' wid me, honey; don' you let him."

For a moment Mammy seemed ready to take the defensive, and Dr. Black shrugged his shoulders in a manner which indicated: "I told you so." Perhaps it was the shrug—Mammy wasn't slow to grasp a situation—but more likely it was the look in her Miss Jinny's eyes, for, turning to the doctor, she said, with the air of an African queen:

"Yo' is de perfessional 'tendant, an' I wishes yo' fer ter do what yo' an' ma Miss Jinny knows fer ter be right wid de patient."

When Dr. Black left a few moments later, he said to Mrs. Carruth, who had followed him downstairs, while Mammy remained behind to alternately berate and calm Charles:

"If we can keep the fever down, the old fellow may escape with nothing worse than his rheumatic twinges—hard to bear, but not alarming; but I don't like the other symptoms. He was too old to take such chances. Can you let me hear from him about eight this evening?"

"Every hour if necessary. He is like one

of our own family to us, and nothing we can do for him or Mammy can ever repay their devotion to us. Would it not be better for you to call again?"

"I'd gladly do so, but I am likely to be summoned to a patient in Glendale at any moment, and with this storm——" And the doctor waved his hand toward the turmoil beyond the windows.

"I know it. I will 'phone if——" Then Mrs. Carruth paused in dismay. What if the wires were down?"

"My wire was all right when I left home less than an hour since, and you may not need me, after all. I hope you will not."

"Amen to that hope," said Mrs. Carruth, fervently, and, bidding the doctor good-bye, she returned to Charles.

As the day dragged on the storm increased in violence. Mammy would not hear of Mrs. Carruth returning to the house, but prepared a dainty tray for her and ordered her into the Bee-hive to partake of her luncheon, and after-

ward to lie down. Perhaps she would not have been so ready to comply with the old woman's wishes had she not resolved upon a course which she felt sure Mammy would combat with all her strength. This was to spend the night with Charles, whose condition did not improve. Toward evening Jean came battling out to the cottage, followed by Constance, greatly to Mammy's consternation.

"I 'clar's ter goodness, yo's all gone crazy!" she stormed as they came in from the Bee-hive. "Fo' de Lawd's sake, wha' brung you chillun out hyer? Ain' yo' Ma an' me got 'nough fer ter pester us wid dat sick man up dar widout any mo' tribberlations 'scendin' 'pon us? Go 'long back, I tells yo', 'fo' we's driven cl'ar crazy."

"Hush, Mammy, dear," said Constance. "I want mother to go back to the house and let me take her place with Charles. I am so strong that it won't tire me, and you know I'm a good nurse, don't you?"

"And so am I, Mammy. You know I am," broke in Jean. "Please, please let me stay."

For a moment Mammy looked as though she were about to take a wild flight into the wilder weather outside, and her wits along with her; then she stamped her foot and said:

"Yo' chillern come an' talk wid yo' ma."

CHAPTER XI.

In the Valley.

"No, dear. I shall not wear myself out," said Mrs. Carruth, gently, though firmly. "I want you to go back to the house to look after the maids and Jean——"

"Oh, I don't want to go back! Please, please let me sleep in the Bee-hive, mother. Please, please do," begged Jean, clasping her arms about her mother's waist. Constance interrupted:

"Yes, mother, do. I will go back if you are determined not to, for I dare say the maids would be panicstricken if left alone; but Jean might just as well remain here with you," for into Constance's active brain had sprung an idea which she wished to carry out, and she knew she could count upon Jean's co-operation.

"But you and the maids would be quite alone in the house," demurred Mrs. Carruth.

"And do you think Jean would be big and valiant enough to protect me from prowlers?" smiled Constance. "It would be a hard-pressed burglar who would venture forth this night, I'm thinking."

Just then a sound overhead caused Mrs. Carruth to raise her hand to enjoin silence, and Mammy was heard to say soothingly:

"Dar, dar, honey, jis' let me raise an' ease yo' up a leetle, so's yo' hits de sof'est fedders in de baid," and quickly upon the softer, more soothing tones followed: "Yit what in de name o' man ever done teken yo' out of dis house yistiddy's mo'n I can tell. Ef yo'd done taken heed ter ma' wo'ds yo' wouldn' never come ter dis hyer pass."

Then followed a series of groans from the patient.

"Mammy is getting worn out and consequently irritable," said Mrs. Carruth. "Yes, you may remain, Jean, but Constance must go back, and I must go to Charles. If

Mammy has much more to tax her strength and mind she will be ill, and she is in no mood to care for Charles now; she will do more harm than good. Good-night, darling. Don't worry about me. I will 'phone over to the house if I need anything in the night." And Mrs. Carruth hurried upstairs.

"Come into the Bee-hive, Jean," whispered Constance. The little girl followed.

"Now, dear," said Constance, earnestly, "you and I have got to take matters into our own hands. Can I trust you, Jean?" Constance dropped upon a chair, and placing both arms about the little sister looked straight into her eyes.

The look was returned as steadfastly, and the fine little head poised in a manner which would have delighted an artist's soul, as Jean asked:

"Don't you know you can, Connie?"

"Yes, I do! And here is the situation: Before we came over here I tried to 'phone over to mother, but even our wire is out of

order. I dare say every wire is, and that the trouble is in the central office, owing to this storm. I did not tell mother because it would only alarm her, and she may not have occasion to use the 'phone at all; I earnestly hope she will not until it is repaired. I shall go home, but I shall not go to bed. You stay here in the Bee-hive, but don't undress, Jean; roll this warm rug around you and cuddle down on the couch. I know you will drop asleep, but I know you will not sleep so soundly that you will be lost to the world altogether. I shall be on the couch in the library and can see this window from there. If Charles grows worse, or you think mother is worn out and needs me, will you flash the electric light three times? I shall know what it means and come straight over." Constance spoke very quietly, but very earnestly.

"I'll do it. I may go to sleep, but somehow I know I shall wake up if I am needed, Connie. Even if I am only fourteen years old

I can be a little woman, as mother so often says I am."

"I know you can, dear, and you are, Jean; even if in many ways you are younger than most girls of your age. I don't think any of us have grown up quite so fast as the girls around us. Mother says we have not, and she does not wish us to, because there are so many more years in which we must be old than in which we can be young; but I reckon we can rise to a situation when occasion demands, and, somehow, I feel that we will both be needed to-night. Dear old Charles, he is pretty sick, I know, or mother would not look so anxious, and *such* a night as this is. Why, Jean, we could not get a message to Dr. Black however badly we might need him. We must depend entirely upon ourselves."

"I wonder Champion did not come over."

"He 'phoned mother this morning, but before she got all his message the connection broke, and, I dare say, the roads have been almost impassable."

"Impassable roads would never keep him from coming," cried the "Champion's" champion. "There must have been something worse than the roads. I don't know what, but I know it was something," insisted Jean.

"Yes, I am sure there must have been, he is always so thoughtful for us," replied Constance, a soft light springing into her eyes as she recalled Hadyn's unvarying kindness from the first moment she knew him. "Now, good-night, honey. I hope you won't need me at all, but I know you will be on the lookout if you do."

A moment later Constance was struggling back to the house through the blinding storm and snowdrifts. As she entered the back door the front one opened to admit a snow-covered, panting figure, and Hadyn confronted her.

"Great Scott! Where have you come from?" he demanded.

"I might ask the same question," panted

Constance, divesting herself of her cloak, and shaking it to free it from the snow which covered it. "Get out of your coat, quick, and give it to Lilly to hang in the kitchen until it is dry. What under the sun possessed you to try to come here to-night, you madman?"

"Under the sun? Nay, lady, neither sun nor moon. I fear you are wandering. Is it a case of blizzard-madness?" answered Hadyn, as he slipped off his big ulster and cap and gave them to the maid.

"Now, come along in here and tell me all the little mother couldn't tell me. Where is she, and where is my little sister?"

"Lilly, please bring some more logs for the library fire. Come in here, Hadyn, and I'll tell you all about it. Mother and Jean are over With Charles and Mammy, and I'm here to mount guard over the house and maids, who, luckily, are storm-bound."

"But why on earth aren't you all here? The little mother and Jean have no business to be anywhere else on such a villainous night. Let

me go right over after them," and Hadyn turned toward the door.

"Stop! Wait! Listen to me!"

"Oh, of course, Mademoiselle la General," laughed Hadyn, as Constance laid a detaining hand upon his arm. "I'm listening."

"Then sit down to do it and hear the whole story. When you really know all about it you can help me; but you might as well whistle to the wind out yonder as to hope to get mother back here to-night. Yes, Lilly, put the logs in the basket, and you and Rose please stay in the kitchen until eleven. I will be out to speak to you when Mr. Stuyvesant goes."

"When he *does*," said Hadyn, under his breath, then louder: "It must be rather satisfying to have such a flower-garden right indoors when it is whooping things up so outside," and he nodded toward the maid just leaving the room. "If you could only have a 'Violet' and a 'Pansy,' and one or two

other blossoms, you'd have a whole greenhouse."

Constance laughed outright as she answered:

"We've had wood nymphs, and some of the months—May and June, for instance—and several jewels, to say nothing of a few royalties, so nothing will surprise us now; but Mammy seems equal to all of them put together. And apropos of Mammy, let me tell you all about her and Charles."

They sat down before the blazing logs while Constance told of the experiences of the past twenty-four hours. Hadyn listened with a troubled face.

"I'd no idea it was so serious," he said, when she finished, "but I am mighty glad I came over to-night. And now you are to heed what *I* say: you may sit here with me until eleven if you will. I'll be right glad of your company. *Then* you are going upstairs to bed—*yes,* you are, too. Now, it is no use 'argifyin',' to quote Mammy. I'll stay

here in the library snug, warm, and as comfortable as any man could wish to be. I shall see Jean's light if she signals, and I'll be good—yes, honest I will. You doubt it, I know, and you think I will sneak over yonder and be more bother than I am worth; but I give you my word I won't. I'll do exactly as you would do if you were here alone."

Constance raised her eyes to his, and little guessed how hard it was for the man who looked into their pure, trustful depths to refrain from holding out his arms to the girl who had grown so dear to him during the past three and a half years.

"I'll take you at your word," she answered.

"Good. Now sit down and toast your toes before this blaze. By Jove, is there anything like blazing logs and soft lamplight? They spell *h-o-m-e*, don't they?" and Hadyn glanced around the cosy room as though to him, at least, it held the sweetest elements of home a man could ask for.

Softly the little clock ticked the moments and hours away as they sat there together, talking over a hundred little happenings of the past years, now and then glancing over to the Bee-hive. But all was quiet. A dim light shone in Mammy's bedroom, and in the Bee-hive Jean's shaded electric light cast a faint halo upon the snow which continued to whirl by the window, although the wind had died down a little and the storm seemed less violent. Shortly after ten Constance went out to the kitchen to see that the storm-bound maids were comfortable. Cots had been placed in the laundry for them, and they were probably far better off than they would have been in their own home.

"Now, are you sure *you* will be comfortable?" she asked Hadyn when she returned to the library. He glanced about the room, at the cheerful fire and the divan, with its numberless pillows, and smiled significantly. "Only trouble is, I may be *too* comfortable," he said. "But you need not worry," as a

slight shade of doubt crossed Constance's face. "I won't go to the Land o' Nod. But *you* must, so good-night, little girl. Go on upstairs and sleep well. I know just what that room looks like; I shall never forget the night you gave it up to me. If I had known it a little sooner, I should not have let you do so, although the memory of it has been one of the sweetest ones of my life. Good-night."

"Good-night, Hadyn, and—thank you a thousand times."

If Haydn held the slender fingers an extra moment, and looked earnestly into the beautiful eyes raised to his, he was hardly to be blamed.

Turning to the book shelves, he selected a book and went back to his chair before the fire. Eleven and twelve were struck by the clock on the mantle shelf, but all was quiet in the little cottage at the foot of the garden. Then came three single strokes in succession; twelve-thirty, one, one-thirty. Hadyn

remembered no more. His wild struggle through the storm earlier in the evening, the silent house, the warmth, the luxurious depth of the Morris chair had all conspired against his resolutions, and three o'clock was striking when he started wide awake with a sense of calamity at hand and the deepest contrition in his heart—an hour and a half blotted out as though they had never been!

CHAPTER XII.

Of the Shadow.

As the night wore on, Mrs. Carruth and Mammy grew more and more anxious for their patient. The severe weather told upon him in spite of the even temperature of the cottage, and he suffered as a man upon the rack. With the intense pain came higher temperature, and by one o'clock Mrs. Carruth began to see that further medical advice was imperative; something more than they could do must be done for Charles, for he could not endure such torture for many more hours. Furthermore, his breathing had become very labored, and Mrs. Carruth feared the worst from that symptom. Without saying anything to Mammy she slipped noiselessly into the Bee-hive, meaning to 'phone to Dr. Black. In that little sanctum all was snug and quiet. Noiselessly remov-

ing the receiver, she tried to call up central. There was no response, and a shadow fell across her face. Then she tried her own home, but without result; the storm had completely disorganized the entire service. She was sorely troubled and about to slip back to Charles, when Jean's face appeared at the top of the stairway, and she called softly:

"Mother, is Charles worse?"

"Why, dearie! What are you doing out of your bed at this hour?"

"Don't scold me, Mumsey, I haven't been in it, only lying on the outside, 'cause I thought you might need me; do you?"

"No, honey, certainly not. You must undress at once and get into bed."

"But, mother, *is* Charles worse?" If he isn't please let me go and sit with Mammy while you come in here and go to bed; you have been up all night. If he isn't worse you can be spared, and I'll be all the help Mammy needs. If he is worse you need me, anyway.

I've had a long rest, and been asleep, too, though I tried hard not to."

As she talked, Jean tiptoed down the stairs, and, coming close to her mother, slipped her arms about her waist and nestled her head against her shoulder. The past three months had made a great change in Jean. For a long time it seemed as though she never meant to grow another inch, for at thirteen she was no taller than a child of eleven, although plump and strong beyond the average child. Then she suddenly took a start and shot up, up, up, until now she was fully as tall as Constance, but slight and pliable as a willow wand.

Mrs. Carruth laid her arms caressingly about her shoulders, and rested her cheek against the wonderful hair: hair of the deepest, richest bronze, and soft and wavy to a degree.

"My little woman," she said, very tenderly.

"If I truly am, then let me do a little

woman's part. You are tired and terribly worried about Charles. Let me come in and help."

"There is so little we can do, Jean. We have done practically all we know how to do, and Dr. Black asked me to 'phone if there seemed to be any pronounced change. I haven't said anything to Mammy, because I do not want to alarm her more than I must; but I would give anything to communicate with him, and the wires are down."

"Yes, I know they are; Connie told me so before she went home, and that was one reason she wanted me to stay here: she was afraid you would need help during the night and be unable to get it."

Mrs. Carruth was about to reply, when Mammy's frightened face appeared in the doorway.

"Yes, Mammy! What is it?"

Poor old Mammy! One of the child-race, she was pitifully at a loss in the face of such a situation as the present crisis. Had it

been any of her white folks she would have been efficient to the last degree, carrying out the precepts of "ole Miss," who "raised" her, remembering with marvellous accuracy each detail of that ante-bellum training, and performing each with a patience and tenderness incomprehensible to those who have never known the heart-service rendered by those old-time servitors. But, strange anomaly, though a characteristic so very marked in her race, Mammy was utterly helpless when it came to taking the initiative for Charles or herself in sickness. Then she turned to her "white folks," and if her Miss Jinny had bidden her drink strychnine, or give it to Charles, she would have obeyed her unquestionably. Strange people that they are!

"Please, come quick, Miss Jinny! I'se powerful trebbled. Charles he sought o' wanderin' in his min' and talkin' a heap o' foolishness."

Without a word Mrs. Carruth hurried from the Bee-hive in Mammy's wake, Jean,

unnoticed, close behind her. As she entered the room Charles was sitting upright, talking wildly and gesticulating to some imaginary person at the foot of his bed. Mammy, true to her instincts, flung her apron over her head, and, dropping upon her knees in the middle of the floor, cried:

"He sees de hants! He sees de hants! His hours done numbered!" and followed it up with earnest petitions for Charles' life. Mrs. Carruth knew colored people too well to waste time in expostulations. She knew that the only way to bring Mammy back to her senses was to set about doing for Charles the things which Mammy, in a more rational frame of mind, would have done herself. Hurrying to his bedside, she said to the semi-delirious old man:

"Why, Charles, did you miss me when I went to speak to Miss Jean? It is Jean you wish to see, isn't it? Well, here she is right at the foot of the bed, but you can talk to her quite as well when you are lying down.

There, that is better," as Charles, in obedience to her gentle easing down, let her lay him back among his pillows. Mammy caught sight of the act, and it recalled her to her senses quicker than a whip lash could have done. Springing to her feet, she hurried to the bedside, and taking her mistress by both hands forced her into the chair near at hand, exclaiming under her breath:

"Bress Gawd, baby! wha', wha' yo' mean by liftin' dat heavy man?"

Mrs. Carruth had not misjudged, but she was none the less concerned for Charles who continued to ramble on to Jean, who stood at the foot of the bed. A distant clock struck one-thirty. Mammy was doing all she could to quiet Charles, while Mrs. Carruth slipped into the adjoining room to prepare some medicine for him. Jean chose that moment to hurry back to the Bee-hive. A moment later the electric drop light was flashing its message across the snow-bound garden to the darkened house beyond.

There was no response. Again and again Jean turned the switch, flashing out across the snow the bright light from the Tungsten bulb, and watching eagerly for some response, but the house remained perfectly dark; and at length, in despair, she gave up signalling and went swiftly back to Mammy's side of the cottage. Creeping softly up to the bedroom she looked in. Her mother was too much occupied with Charles to notice her return, and Mammy was placing hot water bags at the old man's feet. From the anxious look upon her mother's face, Jean knew that she was seriously alarmed for Charles, who was trembling and quivering with a sudden chill. Without a word she turned and sped back to the Bee-hive. Five minutes later she opened the door and slipped out into the night. The storm had nearly ceased, but the clouds, driven by a wild, bleak wind, were still scudding across the sky. There was no moon, and it would have been a brave star which dared send its

cheerful gleam through that cloud rack. Upon the ground the snow lay in deep wind-driven banks, in some places higher than Jean's head. All the world was dark, silent, awesome. Jean never paused. She had formed her plans upon the instant, and was acting upon them as promptly. A hundred feet from the cottage old Baltie's stable loomed in the darkness, the snow upon the eastern side of it banked high as the little window over his stall. Luckily the doors were upon the southern, more protected side of the building; and after struggling and wallowing through the snow until she was nearly breathless, Jean reached them. Pausing a moment to recover her breath, she inserted the key in the lock and opened the smaller door. She was instantly greeted by a soft nicker. Baltie never slept when the footfalls, however light, of those he loved drew near.

"Baltie, Baltie, dear," cried Jean, softly, running to the box and opening the door,

switching on the light as she ran. But neither light nor darkness meant anything to Baltie. His sensitive ears bounded his world of darkness, and love did the rest. His head was in Jean's arms in a moment.

"Can you do it, dear? Can you do it for Charles and Mammy? I wouldn't ask you to if I could go alone, but you are bigger and stronger than I am, Baltie, even if you are so old. Can you take me to Dr. Black's through this deep snow? It isn't so very far, Baltie, and we'll be careful. Can you, Baltie? We must have him, for Charles is so sick."

For answer the horse nestled closer to the girl, and nickered repeatedly.

"I know you mean 'yes,' dear. I know you do. I'll be careful, Baltie. I'll cover you up all warm and snug."

As she talked, Jean threw over Baltie's head the head and neck blanket, which Charles had insisted must be part of the old horse's impedimenta during the severe winter months.

Deftly pushing his ears into the ear coverings, she drew the hood over his head, his soft eyes shining upon her like two moons from the circular openings, and buttoned it around his throat. An extra blanket was quickly added, and then the old saddle was strapped on. Leading Baltie to the door, Jean switched off the electric light, gave one lithe little spring and landed across the saddle. It had not taken her long to shift from her ordinary clothing into Constance's divided riding skirt up there in the Bee-hive, or to add the heavy outer garments the inclement weather made necessary.

"Now, Baltie, we must go, we must, dear. Please, please do your best for Charles and Mammy, they have been so good to you."

As though he understood every word spoken to him, the horse bent to the driving wind and plunged into the unbroken road. Dr. Black's home was less than a mile from Mrs. Carruth's, and ordinarily Jean could have walked it in less than fifteen minutes.

or run it in ten, and had often done so; but all walks and roadways were now completely obliterated. She must trust to her sense of direction and to Baltie's wonderful instinct.

On plodded the good old creature, breaking into a light lope where the wind had swept the street comparatively free of snow, wallowing, pounding, pawing into the drifts where they barred his progress, snorting his protest, not at Jean, but at the elements, though never pausing in his efforts, which made him breathe hard, and more than once slow up for his second wind.

Jean had ridden from her earliest childhood, and had a man's seat in the saddle. Now she leaned forward, her arms clasped about the great, heaving neck, the while speaking encouraging words into the ears laid back to catch her voice. As they drew near the more thickly settled portion of Riveredge, the blank, dense silence in which it lay impressed her strongly. During the first half mile the electric lights at measured

intervals cast their fantastic gleam and shadows upon the snow. In this section they were numerous and brought into stronger relief the ghostly houses. Far off some shivering dog howled dismally, and instantly Jean thought of old Mammy's superstitions, and her convictions "dat ef he howl *two* times an' stop, it sure is fer a man ter die." This dog had howled "two times." Jean was not superstitious, but she was the child of southern-born parents, and had been "raised" by a very typical southern "Mammy." Tradition is very hard to overcome. She shivered, but not from the biting cold, though her feet were numb from it.

Not a human being was in sight as she turned into the street upon which Dr. Black's house stood five blocks further down. They might almost as well have been fifty, for the street was narrower than most of the others, and running north and south had caught the full brunt of the northeaster. More than one piazza and front door was

banked nearly to the piazza roof, and the street itself practically impassable.

Baltie had come bravely thus far, but such a white mountain as now lay before him was enough to daunt a young horse, much less an old blind one. He stopped, his flanks heaving, his head drooping. Jean was almost ready to give up in despair, for the cold had chilled her to the bone, and feet and hands were almost without sensation.

"Oh, Baltie, Baltie, my dear old horse, can't you go a little further? Can't you, dear? Please, please try just once more. It's only a very little way now; only such a little way! I can see the light in front of Dr. Black's door. I'd get off your back and walk, or try to, if I didn't know that I couldn't go five steps. Come, Baltie, please try just once more.

Perhaps it was Jean's pleading, perhaps Baltie's wind had returned; at all events, he raised his head, gave a wild snort, a mad plunge, and, after a desperate struggle,

floundered up to Dr. Black's gate. The house was barely twenty feet from it, but the snow was up to Jean's waist.

She never knew how she forced her way through it, or reached the electric button. She only knew she must do it somehow. When, in response to its prolonged jingling by his bedside, Dr. Black came back to this world of real things from the world of dreams, into which a long, hard day of work and exposure had carried him, and making a hurried toilet hastened down to the door, he found a huddled heap upon the doormat, and saw in the drifts beyond a quivering, panting horse.

In two minutes the whole household was astir, kind Mrs. Black had Jean up in her bedroom, the doctor administering restoratives, the doctor's man had led Baltie around to the stable and was caring for him with all possible despatch.

"Look after her, Polly, and don't let her leave that bed until I say she may. I must

be off to Mrs. Carruth's. I don't believe she even knows this child is here. It's all the result of this confounded storm and the wires being down. Such a blizzard as this hasn't struck Riveredge in thirty years.

It did not take Dr. Black as long to reach Mrs. Carruth's home as it had taken Jean to reach his, and when he arrived he found a distracted household. Hadyn had rushed over to the Bee-hive to find Jean vanished, Mrs. Carruth entirely absorbed with Charles, who was in a very critical condition, and Mammy nearly beside herself. As Hadyn, in spite of Mrs. Carruth's protests, insisted upon going after Dr. Black, he was confronted by that gentleman at the very door.

CHAPTER XIII.

Aftermath.

That storm of March, 19—, claimed many a victim. More than one was frozen to death, many died from the exposure, and many more were invalids for months as the result of it. All that terrible night Dr. Black worked over old Charles, with Mammy and Hadyn to aid him, and Constance to vibrate between the house and the cottage, for with the first peep of dawn Mr. Henry's man came over to dig out the snow-bound family and make a path from house to cottage. Mrs. Carruth, upon learning of Jean's desperate rush for Dr. Black and her collapse at his doorstep, started instantly for his home. Charles could claim a great deal from her, but the claim of her own was far greater, and Dr. Black's sleigh and powerful horse carried her to Jean as quickly as the great snowdrifts permitted.

But Jean was really none the worse for her mad ride once she was warmed and had partaken of Mrs. Black's cup of steaming hot chocolate. She was as strong and pliable as a hickory sapling, which, the storm having passed over it, springs erect and is as vigorous as ever. Mrs. Black soon reassured Mrs. Carruth, and at length had the satisfaction of seeing them both fast asleep in her guest room, Mrs. Carruth's arm, even in her sleep, laid caressingly and protectingly across Jean's shoulder. Both were worn out, and noon had struck before they wakened to reproach themselves for their long rest and to make inquiry for Charles. Dr. Black had just returned, and reported a decided improvement in the old man.

"And Baltie—dear old Baltie?" demanded Jean.

"Baltie is sure enough in clover, little girl," answered the good doctor. "Dried clover, and last summer's clover, to be sure, but none the less clover, for Dick has nearly buried him in it, and the old fellow seems none the worse for

his struggle through snowdrifts. But you are both trumps—the queen of hearts and the king, by George! I don't know how you did it!"

"We *had* to do it. There wasn't anyone else to."

Dr. Black took the earnest face in both his hands, and, looking into the hazel eyes, said:

"It is a pity a few more are not convinced of that 'we had to.'"

Then he drove his guests back to their home. It was agreed that Baltie should not be taken out of Dr. Black's stable until the weather moderated.

A week passed. Charles was out of danger, but still required the closest attention, and Constance insisted upon a nurse from Memorial Hospital. Mammy protested, but her protests were of no avail. Constance saw very quickly that weeks of careful nursing lay ahead, and she would not permit her mother to overtax her strength. Mammy must attend to her cooking and the luncheon counter, now that Charles could not. Constance had her own

hands full with her candy kitchen, for, even with Mary and Fanny Willing to assist her, she had all she could do to keep abreast of her orders. So the nurse took command in Mammy's bedroom, and Mammy had to yield.

Perhaps no one felt the situation half as keenly as Hadyn did. That he had dozed off in that hour and a half in which so much occurred filled him with a remorse he could not overcome. He had been left at a post of duty at a critical hour, and he had failed ignominiously. He would not admit any extenuating circumstances, for he sincerely felt that there were none. If others had kept awake when it was imperative to keep awake, why had he not done so? If little Jean had been able to do so, and when he had failed her had undertaken such a ride, undaunted by the hour, the darkness, the loneliness and the terrific storm, while he dozed snugly before the open fire—oh, it was intolerable, disgraceful! And these friends had done so much for him! True, no harm had come to Jean or to the others, but

Hadyn shuddered when he pictured what might have happened in those ninety minutes. Coax and urge as he would he could not induce Jean to admit that she had signalled to the house for aid, albeit he felt as certain that she had done so as if he had seen the electric light flashed. When he urged she simply closed her lips and shook her head, and as no one else, not even Constance, could enlighten him, he had to let the matter drop.

In the course of the next week Baltie came hobbling back to his home. In spite of all the care given him at Dr. Black's, the old horse showed the effects of his exposure and the terrible tax upon his strength that wild night; yet none who loved him so well dreamed that the great summons had really come to the animal which had given more than thirty years of faithful service to his friends. From little colthood he had been Grandfather Raulsbury's pet until the old man's death. Then had come the dreadful interval of evil days when Jabe Raulsbury had so misused him, to be followed

by the happier ones with the Carruths—days of unremitting care, affection and happiness for Baltie and those who loved him, and especially to Jean and Mammy. And how generously he had requited their devotion to him! Indeed, the last act of his life was to be recorded as one of service to those he loved—a service which had undoubtedly saved the life of one who had tenderly ministered to his comfort. But for Baltie's devotion Charles' life could not have been saved, all agreed, and the one who loved the blind horse more than any other excepting Jean would have mourned her old husband. Mammy's heart was large enough to take in all the world if they needed her love and care, though she often hid that fact beneath an assumed aggressiveness. That was Mammy's way.

From the hour that Baltie had become the joint property of Jean and Mammy, and later the ownership had embraced Charles, they had not missed visiting his stable the first thing in the morning. For a long time Mammy's was

the first voice the blind old horse heard when he greeted the morning sunlight which streamed into his big box stall; Mammy's the first hand to minister to his comfort and caress him. Then, as soon as she was dressed, Jean flew to the stable, and a pretty scene always followed. When Charles came into the family he was the one to go first to the stable; but neither Jean nor Mammy ever failed to visit Baltie a little later, and during those years he had become almost human. Only human speech seemed denied him, but this lack he supplied by his own Houyhnhum language, and the silent but most eloquent language of the eyes and ears which God has given mute creatures—each so very wonderful if dull humans will only try to learn them. In the audible one are almost as many inflections as in the broader range of the human voice, and it is a dull intellect indeed which cannot interpret:

"I love you. I am cold. I am hungry. I am parched with thirst," and a hundred other

sentences, or read the language of the eyes and ears.

And Baltie's vocabulary was a liberal one; his conversational powers exceptional; his friends understanding the keenest.

As often occurs, that blizzard, which is now history, was followed by weather as soft and balmy as mid-April rather than late March. As if by magic the snow disappeared, running away in rivers of water and leaving the turf beneath showing promising bits of green, which made one feel little tingles of joy at the hint of springtime. Only in sunless spots did banks of snow linger surlily and soiled, like some malign creature beaten, but yet too vindictive to withdraw. The stable fronted south, and all the graciousness of that early spring sunshine fell upon it and entered its doors the minute they were opened. In spite of her anxiety for Charles, and her increased labors as the result of his illness and convalescence, Mammy had somehow found time to visit Baltie each day, though she was not often able

to do so early in the morning. It was Jean who ran out to him long before anyone else was astir, and more than once had Constance been obliged to go out after her, lest she forget breakfast, school, and everything else.

Baltie had been back in his own stable about a week when he began to show signs that the wonderful machinery which had endured for so many years was wearing out. Had Charles or Mammy been looking after him then, they would have recognized the signs; but Mr. Henry's man, though he did everything for Baltie's comfort, saw in him nothing but a worn-out old horse, which must very soon go the way of all old worn-out horses, and Jean lacked experience to understand. So the climax came when no one dreamed it was pending.

It was a wonderful morning in mid-April. Out in the garden some pioneer robins had ventured into the northern world, and were calling madly to one another of the grave responsibilities of selecting building sites, and con-

structing homes against the arrival of their wives, who had, like themselves, been wintering in the South. On the southern terrace a few venturesome crocuses popped their heads up through the moist earth to smile a "howdy, friend," at a passerby. Off in the distance the river lay like a mirror, with vast ice floes dropping down stream with the tide, crystal barges for Elaine, and moving as silently, each duplicated in the water mirror that floated them, as were also the opposite shore and mountains. A wonderful picture, mirage-like in its outline and exquisite coloring. Those who knew that river best read the signs unerringly. The farmers living in the environs of Riveredge called this peculiar atmospheric condition a "weather breeder."

There was something in Jean which fairly leaped out to meet the newly awakened world and springtide. From a little child she had lived very close indeed to nature's heart. The first balmy breath of spring seemed to intoxicate her; the first bird-call could throw her into

an ecstacy; an early spring blossom invariably caused a rapture; summer's languor and richness bore her off into a beautiful world of her own; autumn's "mellow, yellow, ripening days, floating in a golden coating of a dreamy, listless haze," conveyed her instantly into dreamland; winter's frost and sparkle produced the wildest exhilaration. Was it any wonder that, coming out into the early morning sunlight of that soft springlike day, with bird notes filling the air, and her own pulses thrilling with life at its dawn, Jean's cheeks glowed and her eyes sparkled with the very joy of living?

It was still very early and no one yet astir. Over in Mammy's cottage a faint smoke wraith floated up from the chimney, telling that Mammy was astir. Jean had thrown a warm cape about her, for the morning air still had its chill, and, enticed by the sunlight, she ran down the piazza steps, inhaling deep breaths of the delicious air. Pausing a moment to revel in it all, her eyes fell upon the stable. The next second she was darting away like a

swallow, no premonition in her heart of what lay behind its closed doors.

Opening the door she entered with a soft whistle. When had there failed to be an instant response to that whistle? This time there was silence only.

"Oh, Baltie, dear! Come, Baltie!" she called, running across to the box stall and opening the door. Then there was a low cry, and Jean stood for a moment as though petrified. On the sweet, clean straw lay the old horse, body inert, limbs relaxed, head resting upon its bed of soft straw as a tired, worn-out veteran's might rest upon his pillow, his eyes closed, and without a flutter of the delicate nostrils to indicate breathing. Life seemed extinct. With a piteous cry Jean glided to the horse's head and dropped upon her knees, clasping her arms about the silky neck.

"Baltie, oh, Baltie, dear, look at me! Speak to me," she begged.

The eyelids fluttered, and the faintest possible nicker was breathed through the nostrils

as he strove to raise his head. Too late! The angel of death was about to claim one of his most faithful creatures, and, let us hope, the recording angel was already checking off the deeds of a devoted life and a disposition which many of his friends claiming immortality might emulate.

"Oh, my Baltie, my Baltie!" sobbed Jean, slipping into a sitting position and lifting the horse's head into her lap. "Must you leave me? Must your life end now? I love you so, Baltie, I love you so! You have been so good, so faithful! How can I let you die? how can I?" and with heartbreaking sobs Jean buried her head in the silky forelock as her arms clasped the great head.

Slowly the sunlight which Baltie and Jean so loved crept around and looked into the window of the stall. On a branch just beyond the window a bluebird caroled as though not in all the sunlit world was there sorrow or death.

In the stall Jean sat motionless. Her first

impulse had been to rush for aid; but who could aid in this extremity? Instinctively the girl knew it to be the end, and somehow, in her great love for her pet, she did not wish anyone else to intrude upon the moment of his passing. She had no idea of the flight of time. Ten minutes or an hour might have passed without her noting them. Baltie lay perfectly still, his head in her lap, her arms clasping his neck. Gently, sweetly as he had lived, so was Baltie slipping out of the world of sentient creatures. Only the faintest flutter of breath indicated that life lingered. His effort to greet the one he loved seemed to have demanded his last atom of vitality. After a little Jean's sobs ceased, though tears still fell upon the satiny head. She did not know how long she had been in the stall, when just the softest sigh was breathed from the delicate nostrils, a faint quiver passed over the great frame, and Baltie was at rest forever. Gently as he had lived, so had Baltie died.

Two hours later Mammy came out to the stable in quest of Jean.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the Springtide.

It is probable that not even those who loved her best realized how Jean had loved the pet which had been her daily companion for nearly four years. The very fact that she had rescued him from a miserable death, nursed and tended him to restored health, had felt his love for her growing with each day, made Baltie nearer and dearer to her than a young, vigorous horse could ever have been.

Baltie was now resting in his lowly bed at the foot of the garden, but Jean did not cease to grieve for him. When Mammy had found her with Baltie's head in her lap that morning there had been a pathetic little scene—for Mammy loved the old horse as dearly as Jean loved him; but had she been entirely indifferent to him, the fact that her

baby loved him would have been enough to exalt him above all other animals in Mammy's sight. Jean was utterly exhausted by her grief and benumbed from her cramped position when Mammy found her, and the good old soul was genuinely alarmed when she tried to help the child to her feet. Baltie's weight and her cramped position had completely arrested circulation. In spite of her own grief Mammy lifted Baltie's head from Jean's lap, laid it gently upon the straw and then helped the girl up, or tried to, for Jean was too numb to stand.

"Bress Gawd, what comin' to us nex'?" she cried, half carrying Jean to the house, where Constance met them.

It was hours before Jean could walk unaided, and many days before the girl smiled again. Mrs. Carruth grew troubled, and one afternoon spoke to Hadyn about her.

"I am so distressed about it. She is filled with remorse for having taken Baltie out that night, and that, added to her grief for

him, is making the child positively ill. I have done my best to make her understand that Baltie had already lived far beyond a horse's allotted years, and that very soon he must have come into his long rest, but I seem to make no impression."

"If I had been on hand when needed he would be alive this minute, and my little girl happy and cheery as ever," protested Hadyn. "I'll never, never forgive myself that lapse as long as I live, and nothing I can do will ever atone for it. It was the most contemptible failure of which I have ever been guilty; but I declare to you, I'm going to do something to make reparation. Where is Jean now?"

"She went down to the Arcade for Constance about an hour ago, but she ought to be back very soon."

"I'll walk down and meet my little sister. I've a scheme simmering far back in my witless mind which may take form and shape if I can keep awake. Au revoir, little

mother," and with the grace so characteristic of him, Hadyn raised her hand and pressed his lips to it! There was no one on earth he loved as he loved this gentle, gracious woman.

Riveredge in its late April dress was very dainty. She seemed to be preparing for Easter, which this year fell late in the month, and over all the world lay the softest veil of gossamer green. The air was redolent of cherry and apple blossoms, and filled with bird notes.

As Hadyn walked down the steep roadway, which led from the Carruth's to the broader highway, he saw Jean coming toward him and waved his hand in greeting. As he hurried toward her he called:

"Well met, little sister," raising his hat and extending his hand.

A quick light sprung into Jean's eyes. "I like that," she said, with a quaint, little upraising of her head.

"Like what, Jean?"

"I like to have a man bow as you do, Champion. Because I'm only fourteen and still wear short skirts some of them seem to think a nod and 'how-d'-do' is all that is required of them, but I don't agree with them."

Hadyn did not betray the amusement this characteristic little comment caused him. He knew Jean to be more observing of the amenities than most girls of her age, and that all her Southern instincts demanded the chivalrous attention which generations of her ancestors had received from men. Many of her girl friends laughed at her and teased her, but that did not lower her standard of what was due womanhood from manhood.

"I should be unworthy the name you've given me if I forgot," said Hadyn.

"It wouldn't make one bit of difference whether I had given you that name or not, you couldn't be different.

"Thank you. But where are you going now?"

"Nowhere in particular. Amy is away

and Connie up to her eyes in the month's accounts. So I'm adrift."

"How would you like to come for a walk in the woods with me? I am not going back to the office this afternoon, for the fever is on me. The call of the woods gets into my blood sometimes, and then I've got to tramp. Only trouble is, I can't always get a tramping companion. Will you come?"

"I'd love to, but I must let mother know, she might worry."

"She won't, because she knows I came to ask you to go with me if I could find you."

They struck into a side road, which presently became a mere wood path leading up the mountain, and from which a little higher up an exquisite picture of the river and opposite mountains could be seen. Hadyn, pausing at a broad, flat rock, said:

"Let's sit down and enjoy all this. Come, sit beside me, little sister."

Jean dropped down upon the lichen-cov-

ered rock, warm and dry in the afternoon sunshine which fell upon it, and said:

"Isn't it beautiful? Isn't all the world beautiful? Why need anybody or anything in it ever die, and why will other people make them. Oh, Champion, if I only hadn't made Baltie!" and quick tears sprung into her eyes. During the two weeks since Baltie's death Jean had actually lost flesh and grown pale in her sorrow and remorse for what she believed to be purely the result of her want of thought.

Hadyn put his hand on hers and, looking into her eyes, asked:

"Little sister, do you know how that hurts *me?* It was not your want of forethought that night, but my faithlessness which carried you out into that terrible storm, and I shall never, never forgive myself. You might have been the victim instead of old Baltie, but as it is his life paid the penalty of my lapse. True, he was very old and might not have lived a great deal longer, but his

end certainly would not have been hastened, or your loving heart grieving as it now is had I done my duty. Can you ever forgive me, dear?"

As Haydn talked a swift change swept over Jean's expressive face; a new light sprung into her eyes, and she said:

"Why, Champion, I never for one single second blamed you. Did you think I did? Oh, you couldn't think that, not when you know how dearly I love you and how good you've always been to Baltie and me. Why, you saved his life, you know, and have always helped me look out for him; and you've done hundreds and hundreds of things for us both. Please, please never say that again. You didn't know I was going to signal that night."

"Ah, but I *did* know it, and it was only upon that condition that Constance consented to go upstairs to bed. She thought she could trust me to answer that signal, but you see she couldn't, and all this is the re-

sult. You are grieving for your pet until you are almost ill from it, and I feel like—like, oh, like the most contemptible thing that ever happened. What can I do to help, little one? It hurts me to see you or yours unhappy."

"I shall not be unhappy," was Jean's instant assertion. "I do miss Baltie terribly, for I loved him, and—and he seemed so much mine, and was so good and faithful—" here a little sob checked her words. Hadyn slipped his arms about her, and she leaned her head upon his shoulder. This big "brother" was a great source of strength and comfort to her. Then she resumed: "But I shall not let it make you unhappy, too. I dare say I am silly—the girls laugh at me and say I am, but I can't help it—when I love anybody, or anything, I *love* them, and that's all there is about it. Baltie knew me better than he knew anyone else, and loved me better. No one knows or believes how he understood me, or I him, and it is no use try-

ing to make them; but I feel as if some part of me had gone without having him to love and visit and pet every day, and have him snuggle up to me. I wish horses could have monuments raised to their memory, and some record kept of their good deeds and faithfulness for people to read. My goodness, more good things could be said of Baltie this minute, and they'd be true, too, than can be said of that dreadful old Jabe Raulsbury; and yet when he died last year they put up a tombstone for him the very first thing, and what do you think they had inscribed on it?"

"I'm sure I don't know," and Hadyn smiled at the thought of any commendatory legend being placed upon the monument of the irascible Jabe, whose life had been one long series of quarrels with his neighbors, brutality to the dumb creatures which had lucklessly fallen into his hands, and whose last act had been to fly into a wild rage and beat his wife. Fortunately, it had been his

last transgression, for a neighbor, hearing her screams, had rushed to her aid, and Jabe, hearing his approach, and starting to escape by a back door, had pitched headlong through an open trap-door and into his cellar. Several broken bones and some internal injuries brought him his just desserts of four months' torture, ending in his death, and the town drew a sigh of relief. Then his widow erected a monument to his memory. It bore this memorial to the deceased Jabe:

"A loving husband, tender brother.
Never shall we find another,"

The first statement was open to doubt, also, the second, for Ned Raulsbury, who had not had the pleasure of fraternal intercourse with his brother Jabe for many years, unless a ten years' lawsuit to secure his own share of the estate represented it, probably congratulated himself that he was not likely to "find another."

Jean repeated the legend with infinite scorn, and Hadyn laughed outright. Then growing serious again, he said:

"Perhaps a better record of Jabe's true character is preserved in his neighbors' memory of him, and I should think that Mrs. Raulsbury might now draw her first free breath. It *is* true that a man's death can sometimes bring oblivion of his evil deeds. Poor old Baltie might have told a few of Jabe's, but even had he possessed human speech I doubt if he would have so employed it. Baltie was a gentleman. And, Little Sister, as a gentleman he must have a monument. Yes, I mean it. A shaft shall mark the old horse's resting-place down there in the garden, and I shall have it erected; it is the least I can do under the circumstances. Don't say anything about it to anyone. What would you like inscribed on it, dear?"

As Hadyn talked in his deep, softly-modulated voice, Jean's face grew radiant. At his concluding question she clasped his

hand in both of hers and pressed her lips to it again and again, exclaiming:

"No one but you would ever have understood! No, not anyone. You have *always* understood; right from the very first day I knew you. Baltie would never have been saved on that awful day, or ever have been mine at all, if it hadn't been for you, Champion, and oh, how hard, hard, hard I love you for it. Please don't ever go away from us; I couldn't live without you now; none of us could; you'll be just one of us always, won't you, Champion?"

Jean was too deeply in earnest to be aware that Hadyn's face was flushing, or of the strange expression creeping into his eyes: a light of wonderful tenderness and yearning. He looked steadily into the eyes regarding him so earnestly as he said:

"Little Sister, do you realize that your home is the only real home I have known in many years? That when you and Eleanor and Constance agreed to share with me 'a

part of Mother,' as you so sweetly expressed it, you made me your debtor forever and ever? Can you understand how very dear that little Mother of yours is to me, or how much her daughters' welcome into their home has done to spare me a great many lonely hours? True, there are many friends in the outer world, but that house was once my Mother's home, you know, and all my boyhood was spent in it. To go back to it under almost any conditions would seem almost like entering my own doors, but to be welcomed to it as I have been makes it—well, some day you may understand just what it *does* make it, little girl. And now I want to tell you something else: You miss old Baltie, I know, and nothing can ever quite fill his place for you, but your heart is big, true and warm enough to hold another, isn't it? For some time I have been dissatisfied with the care given Comet down in that South Riveredge boarding stable. They are careless in grooming him, and someone, I

can't find out which man, is not treating him kindly. Comet never knew the meaning of a harsh or impatient word until he went there, never feared a blow——"

"Strike Comet!" cried Jean, all her sense of justice outraged.

"Not exactly strike him, I think, but there are many ways of making a high-strung, thoroughbred horse's life a torture. A sudden slap when grooming him, a shout if he does not step around briskly, or even a blow on his muzzle with the curry-comb. They may not inflict any great amount of pain, but they soon get on his nerves, and the next thing we know we have a horse that starts and plunges at the first sharp word; jerks his head up if anyone raises a hand toward it; shrinks at the sight of a curry-comb as from an instrument of torture. Comet never before manifested any of those signs, but now I'm beginning to notice them, and I don't like it a little bit. I wouldn't have that horse ruined for ten

times his price in dollars, and so I'm going to see what I can do to place him where all chance of it will be removed."

"Where, where are you going to send him?" cried Jean, clasping her hands in her eagerness.

"How would you like to have him come and live down yonder with you?" asked Hadyn, nodding toward Jean's home, which could be seen from their woodland nook.

"In our stable: Comet? To be there all the time so I could go out to see him every single day, and he'd grow to love me just as Baltie did? Do you really mean it? Could I?"

"I think Comet will meet your advances more than half way. He has been treated like a child since his colthood, and you know how he understands *me*. I've had a long talk with the little mother, and she has agreed to let me keep Comet down there, and my man Parsons is to take care of him, to sleep in the coachman's room upstairs and

board with Mammy. You know most of his color find 'just naturally doing nothing' quite to their liking; but Parsons seems to be of different clay, so we will make him happy by keeping him busy. Good plan all around, don't you think so?"

"I think you are just the splendidest, dearest man that ever lived, and Comet shall have the best care in all the world, and if any living being so much as points a finger at him I'll—I'll—well, I just tell you, they'd better not! Now, let's go right back home and tell Connie all about it. You know she loves Comet as much as you or I love him, and she'll be tickled to death to have him right there," and Jean bounded to her feet all enthusiasm, her eyes shining and cheeks glowing, for something to love and care for was absolutely essential to Jean's happiness.

And so it came to pass that about a week later Comet was installed in the Carruth stable, and if ever a horse came into an

earthly paradise, Comet came into one in this new home.

Jean was in a rapture, and truly no horse-lover could fail to fall complete victim to Comet's charms. It was the balm needed for Jean's sorrow for Baltie, and when, in the course of the following weeks, a granite shaft was placed over Baltie's grave, the little girl was as happy as she well could be.

The shaft bore the legend:

TO BALTIE.

For Thirty Years a Faithful Friend and Servitor.

Perhaps in some more blissful realm
Your eyes will beam on us again,
And we shall find that great and small,
God *is* the father of us all.

CHAPTER XV.

Mammy Makes a Discovery.

June had come, and with June came Eleanor's graduation. During her various holidays Eleanor had returned to Riveredge, and with each return of Eleanor there was vigorous renewal of visits from Homer Forbes. Forbes seemed deeply occupied in the intervals, and those most interested in the progress of affairs at the Irving School wondered at his long absence during the afternoons and his frequent walks up the mountain to a plateau at its summit. More than once had some of the pupils of the Irving School met him as he strolled along toward it, head bent in deepest meditation, hat drawn down over his eyes, hands clasped behind him, and "munchin', munchin', munchin', fer all de spi't an' image ob a goat," said Mammy, who frequently came upon him as he passed through the Arcade, for he never

set forth upon his rambles without fortifying himself with a box of Constance's candies.

Since the fall Jean had not journeyed to the Irving School with her candies, so the sweet-tooth Forbes was obliged to go after his sweeties or do without them. But it did not seem to inconvenience him. The Arcade lay upon his way, and nothing short of dynamite was ever likely to hurry him. He would buy his box of chocolates and start off, leaving behind him a little trail of the paraffin papers in which they had been wrapped, and by which anyone so minded might have followed him miles. Sometimes, if he had absent-mindedly forgotten to eat any luncheon, he would supplement his box of candies with some of Mammy's sandwiches, and it was upon one of these occasions that his call at Mammy's counter led to a curious disclosure.

With the warm spring weather Charles' health improved steadily; but Mammy had no idea of risking a repetition of her recent experiences by permitting Charles to take need-

less risks. On dull days or damp ones Charles must bide at home in his cottage, or do little indoor jobs for his mistress. True, Hadyn's man left very little for the old man to do, for Hadyn had been very careful to tell Parsons that Mrs. Carruth must not want for any service he could render her, and at the same time tactfully spare old Charles' feelings. And Parsons was a clever young negro, as well as a devoted one to Hadyn.

And it so fell out that Mammy went down to the Arcade rather oftener than usual that spring, and consequently saw many things. Among others was the frequency with which Mr. Elijah Sniffins haunted Arch Number One.

Now, Mammy had absolutely no use for Mr. Elijah Sniffins, as may be remembered. Of course, she conceded him the right to purchase all the candy he wished; but why should he dawdle over his selection, and then tarry to talk with Miss Boggs until the girl seemed almost panic stricken? As near as Mammy could discover, she wished him anywhere but

in Arch Number One, and one Saturday morning Mammy took it upon herself to keep a sharp lookout. Several times during the morning she made excuses to go down to the counter for boxes of candy for some of her own customers, and twice found Sniffins there engaged in a very confidential conversation with Miss Boggs. Upon her approach he made most impressive bows to the young lady, and departed with slow insolence.

" 'Pears lak dat man powerful set 'pon dese hyer candies," remarked Mammy.

"Yes, I guess he does like them pretty well," answered Miss Boggs.

"You know him quite a spell back?" was Mammy's next question.

"Oh, yes, for some time," was the hasty answer. "Did you want some more of those pralines, Mammy?" and Miss Boggs fluttered nervously among the boxes in the case, bending low to avoid Mammy's sharp eyes. As Mammy stood talking Homer Forbes came strolling up to the candy counter.

"Good-morning, Mammy Blairsdale. As usual, you have a watchful eye upon Miss Constance's interests, I see."

"Mor'in', Marsa Fo'bes. Yas, sir. Dat's what ma eyes were done give me fo', an' dey ain't often playin' me no tricks, neider. Dey's good, sharp eyes, if dey *is* ol' ones," was Mammy's sibyl-like answer.

"You proved that fact to me many months ago," said Forbes, with one of his whimsical, inscrutable smiles. "I should hate to have a guilty conscience and have you cast your eyes upon me. I'd give myself away as sure as shooting. I'd be sure you'd read my secret if I had one. Lucky I haven't!"

"Yas, sir, 'tis. Mos' culled folks has de gif' ob secon' sight, dey say. I ain't rightly know what secon' sight is mase'f, but I knows dis much p'intedly: I knows dat dey ain't many folks what kin fool me fer long. Dey like 'nough fool me a little while, but I ketches dem sooner or later. Yas, sah, I does. Yo' gwine for one ob yo' strolls terday? 'Pears lak yo'

powerful taken wid dat mountain walk, yo' go 'long up dat a-way so f'equently. Better stop ter ma lunch counter an' git a snack ter take 'long wid yo'."

How innocent the words, yet what a strange effect they produced upon Miss Boggs. Forbes did not notice it at all, but Mammy missed nothing.

"Good idea. I'll be along presently," said Forbes, as he selected his box of chocolates, and reached into the pocket of his trousers for the change, rather abstractedly staring at Miss Boggs as he did so. The girl seemed greatly disconcerted by the look, though, as a matter of fact, Forbes himself was barely aware of her presence. It was not lost upon Mammy, who had given one swift, backward glance as she turned to go down the Arcade. A moment later Forbes reached her counter.

"Give me a good snack to-day, Mammy Blairsdale. I've much on my mind these days, and must keep the brain well fed."

"Reckons yo'll find *dat* wholesome-lak," re-

turned Mammy, handing him a neat little package.

"What's the damage?" he asked.

"None 'tall lessen yo' drap it, er sits on it. If yo' does dat it'll squash."

"Nonsense! How much?"

"Ain't I say nothin', sah?—wid de complements ob de firm," was Mammy's grandiloquent answer. Then, coming closer, she asked:

"Massa Fo'bes, I wonner if yo' kin he'p me wid somepin what's pesterin' ma min' mightily?"

"I'll help you if I can, Mammy Blairsdale. What is it?"

"Kin yo' tell me who dat girl down yonder is?"

"Which girl?" asked Forbes, turning to look down the corridor.

"None yo' kin *see*. I means de one dat's yonder at Miss Constance's counter."

"Oh, that one? Why, she is a Miss Boggs, isn't she?"

"No, she *ain't*," contradicted Mammy, em-

phatically. "She may *call* herse'f Miss Boggs if she wanter, but I'll bait yo' she ain't Miss Boggs no mo'n I'm Miss Brown! I'se seen dat girl somewhar's else befo', an' I'se gwine ter fin' more 'bout her dan I knows now. She favors someone else I knows, an' I ain't got er mite er use fer dat someone else, neider. Is yo' know Mr. 'Lijer Sniffins?"

"The Fire Insurance Agent down on State Street?"

"Yas, sir, dat's him I means."

"Yes, by sight, and enough to have him insure the few worldly goods I possess."

"He's at dat counter de hull endurin' time, 'specially when he git a notion Miss Constance gwine come down, and he'n dat girl jes' as thick as thieves."

"He and Miss Constance?" cried Forbes, aghast.

"Gawd bress ma soul, *no,* sir. I means dat Miss Boggs; an' what I wants ter fin' out is what fo' he got any call ter jist na'chelly live dar."

"Maybe it's a charming romance right under your very eyes, Mammy Blairsdale. Surely you do not wish to play the kill-joy?"

"Kill-joy! Huh!" retorted Mammy. "I ain't gwine be no fool, neider. I tells yo' I never *is* like dat man, an' if he's takin' ter pesterin' dat girl he gotter quit; an' if 'tain't de girl it's some other divilmint he got in his haid. I ain' trus' him no furder'n I kin see his shadder; no, I ain'."

"Has he been there when Miss Constance was at the counter?"

"If he ain't bin dar, he bin whar he kin watch her 'thout her s'pici'nin' it. Time'n agin I'se done seen him up in dat men's furnishin' Arch, Number Six, pertendin' lak he buyin' neckties an' all kynds ob fummadiddles. Reckon he do buy a heap, too, for he jes' splurgin' fer fair dese days."

"Dare say he is trying to make a good impression upon the lady of his heart," laughed Forbes.

"D'ssay he tryn' fer ter mak' a 'pression on

someone else, an' he better quit if he knows what's good fer him. Now, what dat girl scuttlin' down yonder fer?" was her quick exclamation. Over Forbes' shoulder she had caught sight of Miss Boggs hurrying down the corridor, ostensibly toward the lavatory.

"Candy makes her fingers sticky, Mammy Blairsdale," was Forbes' half-idle comment as he turned to look over his shoulder in the direction of Mammy's glance. At that very instant Miss Boggs' profile was distinctly outlined against the white marble wall behind her, and, strange coincidence, Elijah Sniffins, turning suddenly around the corner, came face to face with her. For a brief second each face was distinctly outlined, then the man and girl passed their opposite ways.

But in that instant Forbes had received an impression swift as an electric shock. When he turned to look at Mammy, she remarked:

"Reckons yo' ain't so near-sighted as dem glasses 'ceivin' folks inter believin', sah."

"Where does Sniffins live, Mammy?"

"Don' know no mo'n de daid," scoffed Mammy.

"Where does *Miss Boggs* live?"

"Bress de Lawd!" exclaimed the old woman, apparently apropos of nothing.

"Guess I'll cut out the stroll up Mount Parnassus and look after my insurance. I'm afraid I ought to renew that premium pretty soon. Good-bye, Mammy Blairsdale. I'll see you later."

"Good-bye, sah! Yas, sah, reckon yo' had better see me later."

With his package of luncheon and box of candies, and, as usual, leaving a trail of paraffin papers behind him, Forbes strolled out of the Arcade, incidentally noting that Sniffins was selecting cigars at the counter next Mammy's. Once he was beyond the portals of the Arcade, his accustomed deliberation of air and manner fell from him, and with a muttered "I'll learn what is back of all that or jump overboard" he sped along toward State Street

at a rate which would have startled his friends had any chanced to meet him.

No one but the office boy was in Sniffins' office.

"Where's Mr. Sniffins?" demanded Forbes.

"Dunno."

"When will he be back?"

"Dunno."

"What in thunder *do* you know, then?"

"Nothin'."

"Right you are, son!" and turning Forbes pretended to leave the office. Suddenly pausing, he whirled around to say:

"Give me Sniffins' home address; I'll 'phone to him there this evening." It was a venture, but worth while.

"Six-twenty Westbank Road."

"Thanks. Good-day."

"Day," and the boy returned to the fascinations of "Tom, the Cow-puncher."

Then Forbes went his way up the mountains, having accomplished his object much quicker than he had hoped to. Had anyone been

watching him, once he reached the summit, they might have questioned his sanity. Deliberately placing his candy box and his luncheon upon a stump, he began pacing off distances: twenty long strides toward the river, then twenty at right-angles, pausing to peer toward the mighty stream flowing six hundred feet below him, for the cliffs were precipitous at that point.

"Good site. Magnificent view. Constant inspiration. Bound to succeed. Purely classical. This will emphasize the illusion. But it must not *prove* an illusion; no, not for a moment. It will be a beautiful reality—a crystallized dream. We will set up our Lares and Penates in its very center—ahem! I mean—I mean—well I'll try to persuade her to set hers up beside mine. Wonderful girl! extraordinary, very! Fell in with my idea at once—at least thought the plan—what was it she pronounced it? Ah, I recall, 'truly altruistic.' Truly altruistic. Yes, that was it. Excellent choice of words. Invariably apt and to the

point. Yes, the building shall face this way. Her window—my Lord!" and the monologue came to an abrupt end as the speaker, turning a vivid scarlet, made a grab for his edibles, and, seating himself upon a warm rock, began to devour his luncheon with the dispatch of the animal Mammy insisted he resembled. The sun was sinking into the West when Forbes came strolling up to Mrs. Carruth's piazza, where the family had gathered for their afternoon tea which old Charles was serving. It was the delight of Charles' heart to serve this little repast.

This time it was iced tea and lemonade, with some of Mammy's flaky jumbles and a box of Constance's candy. That piazza was an inviting spot. Hammocks, lounging chairs and bamboo settees made it more than luxurious, and the family spent all the time possible in this corner, which seemed to catch every passing breeze from the river.

They rose to welcome their guest and offer him refreshment. It was Eleanor who first

reached him, and it was beside Eleanor he ensconced himself upon one of the pillow-laden settees.

"Where on earth have you been, you tramp?" asked Hadyn where he swayed idly back and forth in a hammock, Jean nestling beside him. Jean was never ten feet from Hadyn if she could help it. His arm encircled her, and her head rested against his shoulder as she watched Forbes. Jean was growing into a very beautiful young girl, though still a child at heart. "A thin slip of a girl like a new morn" exactly described her. Though Jean was not thin, She was simply lithe and supple.

"Just on one of my strolls up the mountain. Great old mountain! Fine view up there! Wonderful place for a residence!" replied Forbes, devouring jumbles at an alarming rate and quenching his thirst with glass after glass of lemonade.

"Great if you have an idea of perfecting an aeroplane. Personally, I'd not relish rambling up there twice daily, and at present the trail

leaves something to be desired for vehicles which navigate upon this mundane sphere," laughed Hadyn.

"How do you know that Mr. Forbes hasn't already invented an air-ship?" asked Constance. "I hear he goes up there very often, and he may have ways and means of which we are ignorant."

"Only Shank's mare," answered Forbes, stretching out a pair of long, dusty legs. "Jove! I am a sight. I didn't know I was so disreputable. Beg your pardon, Mrs. Carruth, for intruding upon you like this. Truth is, I hurried down that trail like an avalanche, for I'd spent more time at Mammy's counter than usual. By the way, Miss Constance, Mammy asked me to look up an address for her. Will you please give it to her for me?"

"Certainly."

"Tell her it is 620 Westbank Road."

"Six-twenty Westbank Road!" repeated Constance, in a surprised voice. "Why, that is Katherine Boggs' address, and I am almost

sure that Mammy knows it. Why did she ask for Katherine's address, I wonder?"

"Don't know, I'm sure, for Mammy's ways and wishes are beyond the ken of the average mortal," laughed Forbes, as he rose to take leave. As he was about to descend the steps he turned to Eleanor.

"By the way, if you haven't anything special on hand for to-morrow afternoon, won't you come for a stroll with me?" he asked.

"Now, don't you do it, Eleanor," broke in Hadyn. "He means to drag you clear to the top of that mountain, and these July days are over-warm for violent exertion. Can't you see, Forbes, that the very thought of it is making her cheeks flush?"

"Here, eat another jumble, quick!" cried Constance, catching up the plate and rushing to the hammock.

Eleanor and Forbes had sauntered off down the terrace. Hadyn took a jumble, and with a laugh crowded the whole cake into his mouth, his eyes dancing with mischief.

At that moment Mammy popped her head out upon the piazza to ask:

"Is yo' chillen all got 'nough jumbles?"

"One of them has more than he can manage," was Constance's merry reply. "Look at him, Mammy. It was the only way I could close his mouth when he was inclined to say more than was wise."

"Don' believe dat, nohow. Marse Hadyn ain' never is ter say wha' he no b'isness ter," asserted Mammy.

"Hah! I've *one* champion, anyway," choked Hadyn.

"Two," corrected Jean.

"Oh, Mammy," called Constance after the retreating figure. "Mr. Forbes says the address you wanted is 620 Westbank Road."

"Huh? Wha' yo' say?" cried Mammy, whirling about and coming out upon the piazza again, her face a study.

"Yes, Miss Boggs' address, Mammy. Why did you ask Mr. Forbes about it? I could have given it to you, you know."

"My Lawd!" was Mammy's brief retort, and, turning as quickly as she had come, she hurried indoors once more.

"I shall never understand Mammy if I live to be a hundred years old" said Constance. "I often believe I've solved her riddle, then presto! here comes a new phase."

"Leave her alone, Constance. Don't try to solve it. Just take her as she is, and make sure that her 'chillen' come first in her thoughts," said Hadyn. "But, by the by, will you come for a ride to-morrow afternoon?"

"Gladly."

CHAPTER XVI.

Mammy a Sherlock Holmes.

During the following week Independence Day was celebrated, and such had become the fame of both Mammy's luncheons and Constance's candies, that these two busy women found every moment filled more than full.

Each had reason to remember another July Fourth, and Mary Willing most reason of all. The Mary Willing of this year bore little resemblance to the Mary Willing of that one, and a happier girl it would have been hard to find. Fanny was now staying with Mary, sharing with her the pretty little room in Mrs. Carruth's home, and had quite won her way into Mrs. Carruth's heart by her sweet, gentle ways.

During the spring poor, shiftless Jim Wil-

ling had taken himself and his family out West, thanks to Hadyn's influence in securing for him a position upon a large farm in Minnesota, where he was not only compelled to work, but where also, thanks to Hadyn, he could not loaf and drink, for the man whom he served was not be be trifled with. In May the family had emigrated, to the intense satisfaction of those most deeply interested in Mary and Fanny, and the boundless relief of their neighbors.

In the course of the week which followed her suspicions concerning Katherine Boggs, Mammy began to lay her plans, and, as usual, with her accustomed shrewdness. She did not wish Constance to suspect her interference, but she was fully resolved to get to the bottom of the matter. Mammy had already formed her opinion, and Mammy was not often wrong. Fate seemed to favor her, for one morning, when she happened to be at her counter, Elijah Sniffins entered the Arcade, and going to the cigar

stand bought a cigar, which he lighted and began to smoke. He then strolled down toward the candy counter. It was a warm, sultry day, with scarcely a breath stirring. The window giving upon the street in the Arch was open, as was the door leading from Constance's little office, to a short hall communicating with the side street. From her counter Mammy watched Sniffins until he entered the candy Arch, and then slipping out of the rear door of the Arcade made her way around the block and entered Constance's office by the side door.

For greater protection Constance had hung China silk curtains across the grill-work, which divided her office from the counter, but these, while affording her perfect seclusion, did not cut off the sound of a customer's footfalls.

Under ordinary circumstances, Mammy would have scorned to resort to such measures to obtain her end, but she felt pretty sure that her Miss Constance was being

tricked for some purpose, and felt herself justified in fighting fire with fire.

With exceptional wisdom for her years Constance had arranged with Charles and Mammy a little code of signals on the electric buttons beside her desk and under the counter in her Arch. The signals had served to good purpose, as has already been shown, for old Charles had come most opportunely when needed one morning. The code was simple: One ring meant, "Are you there?"; two, "Come to my counter"; three, "Please 'phone up to Mr. Porter that Miss Carruth needs him at once." This last call was clearly an emergency call and had never been put to the test; but both Mammy and Charles, as well as the young colored boy who served at Mammy's counter, knew that it must not be disregarded for one instant if it did come. Constance never knew why she had added it to the simple little code, for she certainly never anticipated any special need for it. Still, it was a comfort to the

young girl to feel that, should anything serious occur, she could instantly turn to Mr. Porter.

Mammy entered the office unheard by the two people in the Arch, the rumble of vehicles in the street drowning all sound of her footfalls. Sniffins was standing at the counter in earnest conversation with Miss Boggs. Presently Mammy overheard these words:

"Lige, I *can't!* I just can't any longer. She's too lovely to me."

"Ah, shut up that stuff. What does she do for you, anyway! Nothin' mor'n anybody else would, an' she gets enough out o' you for seven dollars a week. Gosh, she's makin' seventy if she's makin' a cent. Here, lemme see that last memorandum of sales made."

"I haven't got it here," was the low-spoken reply.

"Then where have you got it? I want it, do you understand."

"I don't see why you want it. I don't see what good it does you, anyway, to know how

much candy is sold here," was the querulous answer.

"Ah, what do you know, anyway? You never did have enough sense to go in out of the rain. *I* know what I want it for. When I'm sure this business is makin' the right-sized pile, I'm goin'—well, never mind what I'm going to do. But what I want you to do right now is to strike for ten dollars a week—see? You've been here six months on seven dollars, an' that's long and plenty. Now we're going to have more of the profits."

Katherine merely shook her head stubbornly.

"Does that mean that you won't?" asked Lige, in an ugly tone.

"Yes, it does."

"All right, all right. Then you can dust your sweet self out of 620 mighty quick. No happy home for you of my puttin' up unless you do as I say, Miss Prude. Now where's that memorandum I want?"

As he spoke Lige made a move as though he intended to go behind the counter. Poor, simple little Katherine! She had never been intended to play a double game.

At that moment Mammy pressed the button four times. Here was a situation needing a firmer hand than hers. A moment later the boy at Mammy's Arch was 'phoning up to Mr. Porter's office.

"Please, sir, I just got four rings from Miss Carruth's candy Arch, and Mrs. Blairsdale, she say if ever I git *that*, I must call you up right smart, and ask you please to go there, 'cause Miss Constance ain't never goin' to ring four rings unless she need you quick."

"I'll be there inside of two minutes, Fred," and the receiver was snapped back.

"Get away, Lige; are you crazy?" cried Katherine, under her breath, at the same time foolishly making a dash for her pocketbook which lay upon a shelf behind her. As she clasped it Lige caught her wrist in a grip

which made her cry aloud in pain. At that moment Mr. Porter entered the Arch. Lige dropped Katherine's arm and made a dash for Constance's sanctum, but Mammy had anticipated all this; she had shut and locked the door leading to the side street.

"Mebby yo' t'ink mos' eve'ybody as big a fool as yo' is, Mr. Sniffins, but yo' see dey's *some* wise an' hones' ones yit, don' yo'? Now, sah, yo' set yo'sef right spang down on dat ar' cheer t'will I ax yo' a few ques-'ions, wha' Massa Po'tah gwine hyar, an' dat po' li'l fool out yonder gwine 'splain ef we sesso. Yas, Massa Po'tah, *I'se* runnin' t'ings just now, an', please, sah, keep yo' eye on dat skunk, fo' I tells yo' he ain't nothin' in de roun' worl' else. Now, *Miss Sniffins*, yo' please, ma'am, come on hyar, too, fo' yo's needed p'intedly."

In spite of the serious side of the question, Mr. Porter could not help smiling at Mammy's generalship. Sniffins stood in the middle of the room, glowering like a trapped

animal, and Katherine entered it trembling like a leaf. Notwithstanding her righteous wrath, Mammy could not help pitying the shrinking little figure, and, placing a chair for her, she said kindly:

"Dar, dar, chile, don' yo' git so pannicky. Nobody ain' gwine kill yo' whilst Massa Po'tah an' me close by, dough, Gawd knows wha' dat low-down sumpin'-nurrer lak ter do if he git a chance; *I* ain' speculatin'."

"Mammy, what is the meaning of all this?" interrupted Mr. Porter at this juncture.

"Dat's jist 'xactly what I don' sent fo' yo' fer ter fin' out, sah. Dere's been some sort of debbilmint gwine on hyar fer a right smart while, an' I'se made it ma b'isness fer ter git scent of it an' trail it, I has. Dat ar'—dat ar', my Gawd! I spec's I *gotter* call him a man kase dar don' seem to be no yether name fo' him, but *he's* at de bottom ob it, an' wha' fo' he is, is jist what I means fer ter fin' out befo' I lets him outer dis hyar office.

Now, sah, Massa Po'tah, yo' kin hab de bench an' question de prisoner."

Porter had seen enough upon entering the Arch to make him realize that Mammy had pretty good grounds for her words and the rage which seemed to almost consume her. Ordinarily Mammy's face was wonderfully serene, but Mammy was a pure-blooded African negro, born of an African slave captured and brought to the United States when the slave trade was a flourishing and disgraceful source of revenue, and Mammy was born not long after her mother's capture. In moments of excitement all her racial characteristics dominated to a degree that transformed her. At the present moment there was a fierce conflict between heredity and tradition, and the environment and training of a lifetime.

"Mammy, tell me what took place before I came upon the scene," said Mr. Porter. "I mean within the last half hour, not before."

Mammy repeated all she had seen and

heard. As she talked Mr. Porter rang the janitor's bell. When the man appeared he said to him: "Get Terry and wait with him out in the main corridor. Do it quickly, and don't make a fuss." Terry was the house detective.

"Now, Sniffins, sit down and explain what I saw as I entered the Arch. There is something wrong here, and I've got to get to the bottom of it right off. It will be useless to beat about the bush now. Mammy has seen and heard enough to make things very disagreeable for you, I fancy, and certainly I've seen pleasanter spectacles than your conduct with Miss Boggs as I entered——"

"She ain' Miss Boggs no mo'n I is," broke in Mammy.

Sniffins would not answer. Mr. Porter turned to the trembling little figure at the opposite side of the room, real pity in his kind eyes. Sniffins glowered at her. Catching the look, Mr. Porter turned upon him like lightning.

"If you try to intimidate that child, by the great Jehosaphat I'll either give myself the satisfaction of thrashing you, or turning you over to Terry on an accusation you'll not like. Now quit it! You haven't a thing in the world to fear, Miss Boggs; I guess it is all far less grave than it seems to you this minute. So tell me the whole truth."

Mr. Porter's voice had changed rapidly from the severe tones directed toward Sniffins, and now held only encouragement for the terrified girl. After a few spasmodic sobs she faced him and said:

"No, Mr. Porter, I shall not try to keep up this deceit any longer. I told Lige when I began it that it would be useless. I'm not the kind of girl who can do such things; I'm not smart enough."

"Reckons yo's too smart fer ter try ter be what he is," broke in Mammy. Mr. Porter held up his hand to enjoin silence, but if Mammy consented to keep her tongue still, she could still wag her head and use her eyes, and to some purpose.

"My name isn't Boggs, but Sniffins——"

"What I done tole yo'!" exploded Mammy.

"Lige is my brother. He wanted me to take the situation. At first I did not know why he was so anxious for me to. I thought it was just because he wanted me to have one which he believed might lead to something a good deal better later on, because Miss Carruth's candy business was growing fast, and I might get to be a forewoman, or something like that. You see, I used to know Mary Willing at school, and she and Fanny are both doing so well, but——" and Katherine hesitated.

"Go on, Miss Sniffins," said Mr. Porter, encouragingly; but the look Elijah Sniffins gave his sister was not pleasant.

"Well, he just made me take this place, and wouldn't let me tell my real name; and I've been scared nearly to death every day of my life for fear Mary Willing would come down here, and that would be the end of it all. But that wasn't the worst; pretty soon

I guessed just why Lige wanted me here, and—and—oh, it seemed as though I just couldn't stand it another minute; I was so ashamed. Miss Carruth is so kind to me, and has always been."

"And the true reason?" interrogated Mr. Porter.

"Oh, I *can't* tell it," cried the girl, turning scarlet and burying her face in her hands.

"It will be better to do so here than to do so elsewhere, will it not? I am determined to get to the bottom of all this, now that I have begun, and much prefer to keep it quiet for the sake of all concerned. I think I already guess more than you realize. I shall ask a few questions to make it easier for you?"

"She ain't got to answer none if she don't want ter," was Elijah's surly remark.

"Will you kindly keep quiet until your information is desired?" said Mr. Porter, quietly. "Your brother wished you to have this situation for two reasons, I take it: The first for the income and prospective ad-

vancement; the second because it brought you in close touch with Miss Carruth and might prove a wedge for his social aspirations, which I hear are ambitious."

The girl nodded assent.

"You objected to the deceit practiced and rebelled. Was that the cause of his anger and gross rudeness as I entered?"

"Partly."

"And the rest?"

"He made me keep strict account of the sales and profits and give him a memorandum each week," whispered Katherine.

"Indeed. And to what end?"

"He said—he said, he'd make up his mind that he would get to know and would marry Miss Carruth if the business got to be—to be —a big one——"

"My Gawd a-mighty!" cried Mammy, flying out of the chair upon the edge of which she had been sitting, her old face the picture of consternation and amazement. It was not surprising that Sniffins sprung from his

simultaneously and made toward the door, for Mammy certainly was wrath and retribution incarnate.

Mr. Porter barred the way of one and said sternly: "Mammy, sit down!"

"But—but—but—Massa Po'tah, is yo' hyar wha' dat man a-sayin'? *Is* yo'? He—he marry ma Miss Jinny's daughter? Why, he ain', he ain' fitten fer ter bresh her shoes! Lemme jes' lay ma hans on him an' frazzle him out."

Mammy was nearly beside herself with indignation.

"Mammy, do you wish to remain here and hear the rest of this ridiculous story, or must I have Sniffins and his sister taken up to my office? It is too public here for loud talking, and if you wish to save your little girl deep mortification, and her mother the keenest distress, you will control yourself. This is the greatest folly I could have believed any sane being capable of, but if it gets noised abroad it will soon grow into a scandal, as

you must realize. Remember this, every one present, Miss Carruth must never learn one word about it if we can keep it from her. Now, go on, Miss Sniffins, and tell all the rest of this wretched folly and, yes, downright rascality, for your brother has placed himself in a very unenviable position."

"You can't *prove* nothin'," protested Sniffins.

"Prove anything! Man, are you altogether a fool? Intimidating your sister into masquerading under an assumed name, to say nothing of handing over a private memoranda of another person's business affairs, and, by the way, Miss Sniffins, I'll take charge of that last memorandum, if you please," said Mr. Porter, extending his hand toward Katherine.

"No, I'm hanged if you do," blustered Sniffins, springing toward her.

With a grip like iron Mr. Porter forced him back upon his chair. Katherine handed him a slip of paper from her purse.

"Thank you. Now, Sniffins, I've just a

few concluding words to say to you, but you will do well to heed them: In the first place, you have made an ass of yourself pure and simple. In the second, you are pretty close to being something far worse. You have done some queer things lately, and tried some very questionable tricks down there on State Street, as you know even better than I do, although, as I hinted to you some time ago, I know enough, and a heap more than you suspect. I don't want to make trouble for you, or any other man just beginning his career, but I won't stand for rascality. Now here is your chance and you have no choice but to take it: You gave your sister no choice, remember, and now it's your turn to eat a little of your own loaf. Ask to be transferred to some other office—the further away the better."

"Ah—what sort of a game are you puttin' up?" snarled Sniffins.

"It is you, not I, who have put up the game, and since you've begun it you may as

well make up your mind to play it out. You can easily get transferred, and that is just what you've got to do. This place has grown too warm for you in a good many ways. Your mother is fairly well-to-do, and your sister has this situation."

"But I can't keep it! I can't!" lamented Katherine.

"You must. Once your brother is away you have nothing to apprehend."

"But my name! What will Miss Carruth think?" deplored Katherine.

"Will you leave that to me?" asked Mr. Porter, real compassion in his voice and face for this unhappy little victim of an unscrupulous will.

"I want to stay, oh, I *do* want to, for Miss Carruth is always so lovely to me."

"You's gwine fer ter stay, too," announced Mammy, autocratically, hastily going to Katherine's side to soothe and pat as she would have consoled a distressed child.

"Oh, Mammy, Mammy, she won't let me stay," sobbed the contrite little soul.

"How she gwine know anything 'bout dese hyer doin's?" demanded Mammy.

"I don't see how she can help it."

"Well, den, I does."

"Keep your situation, Miss Sniffins, and also keep quiet. I shall tell Miss Constance that you gave the assumed name because you feared she might feel some prejudice against engaging you if she learned you were Mr. Sniffins' sister; I am sure that is a pretty valid reason, for she has every reason to wish to avoid him; he has never figured pleasantly in her affairs. And now I think we have had enough of all this. But remember this, Sniffins: I mean exactly what I have said, and South Riveredge is no place for your future business operations. You have come pretty near making a serious mess of things for yourself and everyone connected with you, and a halt has been called. Move on, and take a word of advice from a busi-

ness man of double your years—*move straight hereafter.* Now go."

Sniffins left the office by the side door, which Mammy unlocked and held open with this parting shot:

"Ain' I done told yo' long time ergo dat *some* day niggers gwine fer ter hol' open de do' fo' yo' stid of yo' fo' *dem?*"

Mammy had never forgotten or forgiven the experience of her first visit to Elijah Sniffins' office, and she was settling an old score. Then, turning to Katherine, she asked:

"Wha yo' gwine spen' de nex' few days, honey? I would'n aim fer ter go home ef I was yo'."

"I shall stay with a friend here in South Riveredge. I believe Lige would half kill me if I went home, he's so awful mad."

"Dat's right, yo' keep 'way f'om dat man."

"Yes, it is wiser, Miss Sniffins. Don't worry, all will come out right in the end; he has just lost his head—that's all. Now

mind what I say, both of you: Not one word of all this anywhere else. I wouldn't have all this folly come to that little girl's ears for all I'm worth. It's almost incredible that anyone could act like such a fool. Paugh! it makes me ill. I feel as though some loathsome beast had drawn near that little girl of ours," and with a quick "good-day" Mr. Porter turned and strode from the office, out through the Arch and into the main corridor, where the janitor and Terry stood quietly talking together. They glanced up as he drew near.

"Oh, Donnely," he said to the janitor, "just take a look at that faucet in Arch Number One, will you? It's leaking a little; and Terry, if you'll come up to my office with me you can get those papers now as well as any time." A word, a smile to those in the other Arches, and not a thought was given by anyone to what might have been a very unpleasant episode in Constance Carruth's career.

CHAPTER XVII.

Cupid in Spectacles.

If Constance had any suspicion that a most unusual scene had taken place in Arch Number One, she gave no sign of it.

Within a few days after that occurrence Mr. Porter 'phoned down to her counter one morning, and asked her if she could come up to his office before she returned to her home, giving as a reason his wish to talk over some plans he had in mind for the Arch. She went up immediately, and as simply as possible he told her of Katherine Sniffins' unfortunate deception, her reason for taking the position under an assumed name, and her distress and remorse for having practiced such a deceit. He did his best to spare Katherine and to convince Constance that her only reason for such deceit had been her eagerness to secure the position, and her fear that she could not do so if Constance knew her to be Elijah Sniffins' sister.

At first Constance was strongly inclined to resent it all, and to sever relations with the victim of Elijah Sniffin's scheming, but gradually, as Mr. Porter talked, her sense of justice prevailed, and her resentment changed to pity, and with that the day was won.

Perhaps Mr. Porter's casually dropped remark regarding Mr. Elijah Sniffins' sudden departure from South Riveredge to take charge of one of the company's offices in the far West, and the added information that he would not return to his former home, was the final straw which turned the balance in Katherine's favor. Constance was a generous-hearted girl, to whom petty resentment was impossible. And so that chapter in the lives of the girls, so utterly unlike in character, was closed, and Constance never knew what an exceedingly unpleasant one it might have been for her but for Mammy's ceaseless vigilance and Mr. Porter's wisdom. For a few days, it is true, she was somewhat disturbed, and it needed all her self-control and dignity to help her through the

half-hour's talk with Katherine, but once that ordeal was over she dismissed it all forever, and was the same sweet, gracious little employer whom Katherine had always known. If Katherine had admired her before, she openly adored her now, and confided to Mary Willing, whom she met not long after, that she "didn't know there *could* be girls like Constance Carruth," and forthwith eulogized her until, had Constance heard it, she might have been forgiven if she had begun to feel around her own shoulder blades for sprouting wings.

Mary let her talk on, secretly rejoicing in every word spoken in praise of her idol, then with a most superior "why—anybody—could —have—told—you—that" air, she said:

"It's all very well, I dare say, for people to work like everything to reform girls who have actualy *done* wrong and are in disgrace, but from my standpoint, if a few more people would do the things Mrs. Carruth and Miss Constance are doing as a matter of course every day of their lives, there wouldn't be so

many girls in need of reforming, because they would be helped to have a little common sense and an idea of the fitness of things before they went too far. Everybody knows what a silly little fool I used to be whenever a man came near me, and I'd be one yet if it hadn't been for those blessed people; but I tell you they made me sit up and take notice, and they did it so beautifully, and with so much love and sweet fellowship thrown in, that I'd die to-morrow if it could save just one hair of their dear heads. You may think I'm just talking for effect, but I'm not. I mean every single word I say, and if you ever get to know them as Fanny and I do, you will feel exactly the same way, you see if you don't."

"I do already, though I can't talk as you do," answered Katherine, simply.

"They have helped me that way, too," added Mary. "My goodness, how I used to talk and what awful words I used before I knew them! But they teach you without letting you ever guess they are teaching, and you learn because

you can't help it. Good-bye. Come down and see me some time."

"Can I come to see you down there?"

"Why not? The little sitting-room up over the candy kitchen is just like our own. Miss Constance told me to invite any of my girl friends to visit me whenever I wished to, and we have lovely times up there evenings when the work is done. Sometimes Mrs. Carruth or Miss Constance come out to sit with us a little while. They always say they have come out to welcome their guests, because Fanny's guests and mine are theirs, too. Isn't that a sweet way of putting it? We know, though, that they do it because they want our friends to feel at home, and there hasn't been a single evening when they haven't sent Mammy up with some cake, or lemonade, or something nice, and I can always take a pound of candy if I want to. Oh, there's no place in all the world like the 'Bee-hive,' I tell you!" And, with a happy smile, Mary went upon her way.

Not long after this something else came up

that filled the Carruth household with subject for thought.

Before leaving college, Eleanor had been offered a position in a girls' school. The school was one widely known, and prepared a great many pupils for Eleanor's alma mater. She had been highly recommended by its faculty, and had fully decided to accept the position. All that remained to complete the arrangements was her final acceptance above her own signature and that of the school's principal. This she was on the point of settling when she returned to Riveredge, then a trifle changed her decision. Homer Forbes came home with her, and on the way she told him of her plans.

He listened with great interest, although without comment, meanwhile gazing abstractedly out of the Pullman car window until Eleanor began to wonder if he heard one word she said, and, if the truth must be confessed, was not a little piqued at his seeming unconcern.

As usual, when thinking deeply, he munched away upon something. This time it happened to be a long spiral of paper he had absently torn from a magazine and twisted into a lamplighter, and Eleanor found herself subconsciously wondering how much of it would disappear before he recovered his wits and spoke.

About four inches of it had vanished, and, had Mammy been present, her theory of the goat would surely have been substantiated, when he gave his paper fodder a toss, and, turning toward her, said:

"Don't sign that contract until you get home and have thought it over a week. Then if you *do* sign it, do so for six months—one term—only."

"But," interrupted Eleanor, "that seems to me a most improvident step, for right in the dead of the winter it would leave me without occupation or the prospect of any."

"No, it wouldn't, either. Do you think I would suggest such a step if I didn't have something up my sleeve for you a mighty

sight better—er, ahem! I mean if I hadn't been on the lookout for something desirable —or, or, at least, something I feel you would consider."

"What is it?" was Eleanor's very natural and direct question.

"Eh? Ah, well, er—a little enterprise, a scheme, a—er—What station is this we're drawing into?" and this discussion was sidetracked instantly, leaving Eleanor to wonder if Forbes had lost his senses.

She had been home a little more than a week when he asked her to take a walk with him, and had led her a wild scramble to the top of the mountain to the plateau heretofore mentioned, where he unfolded a plan which caused Eleanor to collapse upon a nearby rock and sit looking at him in a bewildered manner. Again and again during the ensuing weeks had they toiled up the mountain, and each time had returned grimy, gratified and garrulous, heads nodding, hands gesticulating and oblivious of

any other human being on top of the round world.

Mrs. Carruth watched developments with resignation; Constance with open amusement; Mammy with a division between tolerance and contempt—the saving grace in the cause being that Forbes could remotely claim kinship with the Blairsdales. But it was upon Jean that the effect was the funniest. Jean had spent all her life with people older than herself. There had been no little children in her home, and her interests had naturally centered upon her older sisters and around their affairs. She had a wise little head upon her fourteen-year-old shoulders, and older people would have been somewhat surprised could they have known the "long, long thoughts" which passed through it. More than once had she seen Forbes and Eleanor start off and toil up the mountain, and more than once had she been an unobserved follower. She never followed close enough to overhear their conversation; that

would have been contrary to her sense of honor. Still, she was determined to know where they went, and, if her eyes could inform her, why they went, and her deductions came nearer the mark than the two would have believed possible.

And so had passed the summer days, and now September was at hand, and in a very short time Eleanor would start for Forest Lodge—the school in which she had accepted a position for six months—*not longer*. Forbes' influence had prevailed.

Early one morning the 'phone rang. Eleanor was wanted.

"I know what it is," cried Jean, who happened to be near it and turned to receive the message: "It's Mr. Forbes, and he wants Eleanor to play Pilgrim's Progress with him again, I'll bet a cookie." The funny one-sided conversation began only to be interrupted by Jean, who exclaimed:

"What makes you think you're talking to Eleanor? Are our voices so alike as all that?

Hold the wire while I call her, and don't waste all those nice speeches on me," and with a chuckle Jean turned to call Eleanor.

That afternoon Forbes called for Eleanor, and just as they were about to start upon their pilgrimage Jean came tearing out upon the piazza with two gorgeously colored laundry bags, rose-flowered and highly decorative, which she plumped down upon the piazza.

"Jean!" expostulated Mrs. Carruth. "What in this world?"

"Well, I don't see any sense in playing a game unless you have the 'impurtenances,' as Mammy calls them: it must seem sort of half played. So I've filled these bags full of newspapers, and if you'll each sling one over your shoulders you'll be sure enough 'pilgrims,' and goodness knows you climb up that mountain often enough to give 'Pilgrim's Progress' to the life!"

Then Jean fled, and so did Eleanor and Forbes.

Panting and hot, in the course of time they reached the summit of the mountain and the plateau, every square foot of which should have been known to them by this time. Seating themselves upon the log, which had done duty many times before, Forbes at once began to unroll a great blueprint which he held at arm's length, and said:

"*Now,* I can show you the tangible evidence of my dreams. You see the plan is this:"

But, alack! the best-*drawn* plans, etc., and this plan was printed upon the stiffest of architect's paper, and had been rolled tightly for several days: Forbes' fingers were a trifle shaky for some reason; one edge of the outspread roll slipped from them and quick as a flash coiled up upon itself, sweeping his glasses from his nose and hurling them ten feet away, where they crashed upon a rock and shivered to atoms.

Now, if anyone reading this is solely and entirely dependent upon a pair of glasses to see anything ten inches beyond her own nose,

she will understand how Forbes felt at that particular moment—maybe.

They bounded to their feet and inanely rushed for the wrecked glasses, knowing perfectly well that only bits of scattered crystal lay upon that merciless rock. Eleanor dropped upon her knees and began frantically to gather up the fragments, Forbes towering above her and blinking like an owl which has suddenly been routed out of a hollow tree into the glaring sunshine. A fragment, about two-thirds, of the lense of the right eye still held to the nose-clip. Eleanor pounced upon this, crying:

"Ah, here is a little piece, a very little piece! Do you think you can see with that? See just a little, little bit? Enough to look over the plans? I'll read the specifications to you. I'll do anything, anything to help you, I feel so terribly sorry. Let me be your eyes for just a little while, for I know how disappointed you must be," and there was almost

a sob in her voice as she rose to her feet and held the hopeless bit of eyeglass toward him.

He took it, deliberately opened the patent clip and as deliberately snapped it upon his nose, Eleanor watching him as though worlds trembled in the balance.

If half a loaf is better than no bread, I dare say two-thirds of an eyeglass are better than no eyeglass at all; and who in such a vital moment would have dared hint that Forbes looked slightly batty as he cocked one eye at the lady before him? Certainly not the lady, who was the very picture of Dolores at that instant. Then Forbes came to the front splendidly. Indeed, he came with a rush and a promptitude which no one could have foreseen; he made one step forward, and the next instant held the lady in his arms, as his words poured deliciously into the ear so near his lips:

"My eyes! My eyes! You shall be my eyes, my ears, my soul!—yes, my very body and boots. No! no! I don't mean that! Oh,

hang it all, what made me say that foolish thing? I mean you *are* my eyes and my very soul! Without your inspiration my very mind would be a blank. With you the dreams of my life will be crystallized into beautiful realities. Never, never shall I let you leave me! Never depart from your home until this one we have pictured and planned stands ready to receive you within its walls, to be its cherished, adored light; its inner shrine, at which I shall be the chief worshipper, my goddess of sweetness, light and intellect! My inspiration to ideals beyond man's conception.

But let us draw down that thick fir bough as a curtain.

Off yonder, upon a moss-covered stone, sat a little figure, hugging his knees and swaying backward and forward in an abandonment of hilarious mirth. At his feet lay a bow, beside him an empty quiver. On his wee nose the wreck of a pair of thick-lensed eyeglasses.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Harvest Time.

The September days were exceptionally warm ones, but no one seemed to mind them because the evenings were cool. The two pilgrims continued their progress, advancing rapidly and in such a rosy atmosphere that the millennium seemed close at hand. Whatever Homer Forbes' plans were, and as yet only he and Eleanor seemed to know much about them, they evidently met the entire approval of the lady in the question, for she threw herself into the process of perfecting them with an ardor that nearly drove her family frantic. No matter where they turned, they found plans and specifications lying about, and Eleanor's room resembled an architect's drafting-office. Not long after that walk up the mountain there had been a closeted hour's talk with Mrs. Carruth, and

when Homer Forbes came out of the library at the end of it he was in such a perturbed state of mind that he nearly fell over Mammy as he rushed through the hall, out of the front door and across the piazza, to vanish down the road and leave the family staring after him; at least, that portion of the family which happened to be seated there. Hard upon his heels followed Mammy, crying:

"Gawd bress ma soul! what Miss Jinny done ter dat man? 'Pears lak he gone plum loony." Then, turning to Mrs. Carruth, who followed not far behind, Mammy continued: "Miss Jinny, is dat man gone cl'ar crazy?"

Mrs. Carruth smiled as she replied:

"They sometimes call it 'a very mid-summer madness,' Mammy, but mid-summer has passed, hasn't it? It's not dangerous, however. You would better go upstairs and ask Miss Nornie. I am sure she can tell you more about Mr. Forbes than I can. At all events, she has decided to let him guide her through life, so she must have an abiding

faith in him, and I have told him he may do so if she wishes it. By the spring you will have to climb to the top of Mt. Parnassus if you wish to see your Miss Nornie, I think."

"Whar *dat* place at?" demanded Mammy, while Hadyn gave a low whistle, and Constance cried, "What did I tell you, Mumsey?" as Jean jumped up and down in her excitement.

"You had better go upstairs and ask Miss Nornie, Mammy," and straightway Mammy whirled about and started upstairs to Eleanor's room, where she found her buried neck-deep in a pile of drafting papers, triangles, compasses and pencils; though just what she was drawing plans for Mammy could not guess. When questioned of late Eleanor had given negative, abstracted replies which more than once nearly convulsed her hearers, and upon one occasion she had brought consternation upon the family by emptying a brimming washbowl of water into her scrap-basket instead of her slop-jar. Evidently the scrap-basket had figured more prominently

in her thoughts of late than had her wash-bowl.

As Mammy appeared at the door Eleanor was bending over a great blueprint plan which she had spread upon the floor. It was a tremendous affair, fully two by four feet, and Eleanor was down upon her knees, hands outspread and locks flying, too absorbed to be aware of Mammy's presence.

"Peripatos, peristyle penetralia," murmured the engrossed one, tracing with a slender forefinger the lines upon her plan, then repeating, "Penetralia, penetralia. How interesting."

"What in de name o' man is you jabberin' about, anyway, Miss Nornie?"

Eleanor came to an upright position with a start, crying:

"Goodness, Mammy, how you startled me!"

"Yo' better had git up f'om dat floor 'stid o' bendin' ober dat sky-blue sheet o' paper what done look lak it got Chinee writin' an'

drawin' on it. Yo' face make out de res' ob de colors fer de hull 'Merican flag: red, white an' blue alltergedder. 'Taint no kynd ob a day fer ter be bendin' ober lak yo' is. Nex' t'ing yo' know yo' gwine git rush o' blood ter de haid, an' dat's bad, I tells yo'! Wha' yo' gwine do wid all dat blue stuff, anyway? Yo' ain' tell me one single t'ing 'bout it, an' I ain' know wha' 'tis. An' I wants fer ter know, too, if yo' gwine be home ter lunch ter day." Mammy's sharp eye scrutinized the rosy face before her.

"O, you needn't bother about me, Mammy. Mr. Forbes will be over shortly and we are going for a tramp."

"Tromp! tromp!" echoed Mammy. "Tromp on sich a hot day as dis hyar wid de fer-mom'ter jist nachelly climbin' cl'ar out er sight? Is you done gone silly, yo' an' dat Perfesser Fo'bes? Yo' stay ter home in dis cool house what I done darken up fer ter keep out de sizzlin', billin' heat. It fa'r scoch de very skin off yo' body. Don' yo' let dat

man drag yo' up dat mountain on sich a day, I tells yo'."

"Oh, we don't mind it, and the woods are so cool. Just put up one of your delicious little luncheons for us, and we'll be more than supplied."

"Cool in de woods! Yis, when yo' gits to em, but yo's got right smart ter walk fo' yo' comes ter dem, an' I ain' pinin' fer no sich 'xertion on such a frazzlin'-out day. But I reckons I jist better save ma' bref dan spend it a-talkin'. Yo' lunch gwine be ready fo' yo' when yo' ready fo' it; but what I wants ter know now is, what all *dat* meanin'," and Mammy pointed again to the big blueprint.

Eleanor was not given to emotion but there come times in every life when one's emotions are more easily played upon than at others. The past week had held such moments for Eleanor. Of all Mammy's children Eleanor had been the least demonstrative. She rarely caressed the old woman as Constance and Jean did. Now, however, she

bounded to her feet and, rushing to Mammy, cried:

"Oh, Mammy! Mammy! Do you believe in dreams? Don't you think they come true sometimes?"

"A heap o' times!" interjected Mammy.

Eleanor sighed ecstatically. I *knew* you would say so, Mammy. "And *ours* will, won't it?"

"Who 'ours?'" demanded Mammy, her lips pursed up, and distrust in her eyes.

"Homer's and mine! Homer! Isn't that a name to inspire one? Fate must have ordained that he should bear such a name. Only a classic poet's could be in harmony. It must be the purest, the best, the finest, the most perfect," rhapsodized Eleanor.

Mammy looked at her a little anxiously, and asked:

"Isn't yo' better lay down on dat baid yonder? Yo's been a bendin' ober dose papers twell yo' haid's achin', I'se feered."

"Ah, no, Mammy, but think of it! To

live in a Grecian dwelling! A perfect reproduction of an Athenian temple. With the fountain of Hippocrene in it's center, from which a rill will flow murmuring all the day. Helicon's harmonious stream. We shall call it Helicon Hall, and there we shall train the youthful mind to a deep appreciation of true beauty. In the central court, overroofed with glass and filled with tropical plants, will be our hearth stone, our altar, on either side of which will stand our lares and penates. Could any other mind have conceived this wonderful dream in this prosaic age? See, see our plans, Mammy? How clear, how concise, how graphic. Ah, I can picture it all—all."

"Well den I cyant!" cried Mammy, losing patience, "and I don' reckon yo' Ma nor none ob de yethers kin. At any rate, I got sumpin else ter do 'sides standin' hyar listenin' at what I sets down as jist foolishness; an' ef I was yo' Ma I'd tell yo' not ter go a-climbin' up dat mountain no mo' twell de wedder done

cool off some," and with this admonition Mammy left the dreamer to her dreams. But before we take a long leave of her, we will add, by the way, that in the course of time this dream crystallized into a large building, in the form of the Parthenon, wherein this modern Socrates, Professor Homer Forbes, and a charming Hypatia, his wife, led the minds of affluent youths, whose parents were willing to indulge them in such luxuries, along paths of learning literally flower-strewn. Reclining at length upon the green sward of the court of Helicon Hill, they drank in the words of wisdom falling from the lips of their preceptors. Eleanor had achieved her ideals: Homer Forbes his. What more could mortals ask?

And the lares and penates? Well, Jean was rather practical. Those old Greek fireside gods might be all very well in their way, but Greece had seen *her* day. In the present one there was a quaint little grinning "god of things, as they ought to be," to which Jean

pinned greater faith; and when, one beautiful April day, Homer Forbes and his bride returned from their wedding journey, and entered the inner court of Helicon Hall, where the (let us hope) sacred fire burned upon the hearth, the first thing upon which Eleanor's eyes rested in these classic surroundings was "Billykin," perched above the blazing logs.

And in the interval between that warm September day and the lighting of that hearth by loving hands for the home-coming of the idealists? Ah, life holds some sweet moments, and this old world is not such a bad one, after all. But we anticipate.

October came again, and all the world was beautiful in its golden haze. With Eleanor's engagement to Homer Forbes, and her complete absorption in her demi-god, who had changed her plans so completely, her future so entirely, Eleanor plunged headlong into consummating his dreams so far as in her power lay. This left Constance largely

to herself and her own plans. All had gone well with her, and, with the beginning of the social season in Riveredge and elsewhere, Constance's business grew very brisk. She was kept busy from morning to evening. It was a wonderfully happy life for her. To be the chief support of her family, to give to her mother the thousand little luxuries she had known in earlier life, to give to Jean every possible advantage, both educational and social, and still have time to enjoy life at its heyday herself—why—surely, no more could be asked.

Mary and Fanny Willing were as happy and content as two girls well could be, and worked and sang from dawn to twilight. With the autumn even more help became necessary to keep abreast of the orders; and, through Hadyn, Constance secured the services of a man in whom Hadyn was deeply interested. He had known him in college days, but days of adversity had overtaken him, and for two years he had seemed to be the very toy of an

adverse fate. In that interval his family had slipped into the Great Beyond, and the small nest-egg left him had been swept from him by the failure of the company in which it was invested, throwing Edward DeLaney upon his own resources.

Upon Hadyn's advice he was engaged by Constance as bookkeeper and a sort of general superintendent, dividing his time between the Candy Kitchen, the Arcade, and the other booths, which, in the course of time had been establised elsewhere. He was only twenty-five, but an able, manly fellow, quick-witted and resourceful. He took firm hold of affairs instantly, and, during the course of the ensuing winter, Constance more than once thanked the lucky star which had guided this tall, clear-eyed, finely-set-up six-foot laddie to her Candy Kitchen. No one could look into those fine, hazel eyes without trusting them instantly, nor see the lines of that resolute, yet tender mouth without reading the man's character. His skin

was as fair and as clear as a child's, and his smile as winning. He speedily found his way into the home circle, and just the degree of happiness it brought to him few guessed.

But this is dipping into the future by several months. At present we are in October's golden glow.

"What a day!" cried Hadyn, as he and Constance came out upon the piazza one beautiful afternoon when luncheon was over.

"Isn't it simply heavenly? It seems to me we never have such days excepting during October. Look at the coloring over on that mountain and on our own hills. It is perfectly intoxicating. It makes me feel like doing something out of the usual order, and yet I ought to go out yonder to the Candy Kitchen and lend a hand with the thousand and one things to be attended to. I tell you, Hadyn Stuyvesant, I am rapidly becoming a power in the commercial world," laughed Constance.

"You are a greater power already than

you guess. Before you know it that business will have grown beyond its boundaries again, and even greater expansion will be necessary. But just now let's 'forget it,' and go for a ride up that glorious mountain. I'll 'phone down to Pringle's for Lightfoot, and we'll have an afternoon fit for the gods."

"Done! I'm only human, and the call of the woods on such a day as this drowns the call of duty. But I hate to take Comet from you; you seem so much a part of each other."

"Since he came to live here he has become a part of you all, and more nearly *human* than ever. Jean has seen to that. How that child loves animals! I've a little scheme in the back part of my head which I mean shall take tangible form when her next birthday comes around."

"Oh, what is it?" cried Constance, for everything concerning Jean held the keenest interest for her.

"Tell you after we've had our ride. I'm off now for my togs. See you inside half an

hour. Tell Parsons to saddle Comet for you," and with a wave of his hand Hadyn hurried away to get into his riding clothes. An hour later they rode away from the house, as bonny a pair as eyes could rest upon, and upon which one pair did rest with the love and devotion one often sees in the eyes of a dog; Mammy raised her apron, wiped a tear from her lids, and said softly to herself:

"*Dem's ma chillen.* Yis, jist ma own God-blessedest ones what ever *is* live! Him, too. Miss Nornie kin tek up wid dat Perfesser man ef she wanter, but *gimme dat one ridin' 'way yonder.* He's de very cream ob all creation, an' he gwine be mighty good ter ma baby, too. I ain't need no secon' sight fer ter read *dat* writin'. An' he gwine fin' out what a pearl o' price he gettin', too, dough I reckons he got some notion o' dat a'reddy. An' he gwine git somepin' he ain' countin' 'pon a mite, an' would be clar *'bove* countin' 'pon anyhow; he gwine git a wife wha' got her

own nes'aig. Charles an' me ain' run dat ar' lunch counter all dis time jist fer fun an' de reppitation it done give us; no, sir-ee! We done put 'side 'nough fer ter give each o' ole Massa's gran'chillen dey *dots,* as dose French folks calls it. Yis, we is, an' I's proud ob it, too. It's de onlies' way we kin eber show em dat dey's ours, an' we's deirs. Mebbe Massa Stuyvesant got a-plenty, an' mebbe Massa Fo'bes is got, too, a-plenty fer 'em bofe—I dunno—but I knows dis much: A 'omans a mighty sight mo' self-respectin' an,' an' sort o' stan'in' firm on her own foots ef she knows dars a stockin'full o' gol' wha' she kin turn inside-out ef she want ter 'thout axin' 'by yo' leave, Mr. Man, no matter how she love him or he love her. An' me an' Charles done fix dat all right, so we has. Gawd bress ma chillen! Gawd bress em! Dey's filled ma soul wid joy all de days of ma life, and dey's made Charles' foots fer ter walk in de green pas-t'ers endurin' his declinin' years. Oh, we's happy, we is, wid de Gawd-blessedes' white folks two ol' cullered folks ever is know."

CHAPTER XIX.

"That is best which lieth nearest;
Shape from that thy work of art."

How quickly things come about in this world. Barely an hour had passed since good old Mammy watched her "baby" ride away so happily. Never were hearts lighter than those of the riders. The girl mounted upon the beautiful thoroughbred bay horse, which had grown to know and love her voice and touch as he knew and loved his master's; his splendid head tossing up and down in his delight; his superb neck arching in pride; his delicate nostrils distended to draw in delicious whiffs of the pine-scented air; his dainty hoofs barely touching the ground! Grace, beauty, strength incarnate as the play of the great muscles beneath that satiny coat carried him forward—one of God's most perfect creatures.

The girl riding cross-saddle felt the thrill of his action to her finger-tips. Her body swayed with every motion of the beautiful horse. She seemed a very part of him; he of her. The man riding beside her upon his fine gray was fully alive to the beauty of both rider and horse, and his eyes rested upon them with intense admiration. The soft light of the woods seemed reflected in the eyes she turned toward him—its mystery in the smile which curved his lips. It was a happy world, and these two could enjoy its beauty.

The horse Hadyn rode was a high-strung, nervous creature, alert to every sound or motion about him. As they passed through the town he had shied more than once., and required firm handling; but up in this silent mountain road there was little to excite him, and Comet's example had a quieting influence. They had nearly reached the summit of the mountain, and just ahead the road made a sharp turn. They were close upon it when a warning honk! honk! caused Haydn to tighten

his hold upon his reins. Then around the turn whirled a huge touring car. It was all over in a moment. The car skidded, hurled itself against the riders, the chauffeur made a desperate attempt to control his machine, but failed, and it tore on down the mountain entirely beyond his control, leaving behind it a prone horse and a madly excited one, which, in spite of its rider's strenuous efforts to control it, dashed on a quarter of a mile up the mountain before he could stop it, turn and gallop back to the spot where the accident occurred. Those minutes seemed like years to Hadyn. Flinging himself from the horse, though still holding the bridle rein, he cried:

"My God, my darling!" as he caught Constance in his arms. She did not appear to notice his act or his words, but stood, white and trembling, pointing to Comet.

"But you, you, my little girl! my little girl!"

"No, no! I'm not hurt a particle. Quick! tie that mad brute to a tree and *do* something. I slid off as Comet fell. I'm not hurt; but he,

he is dying. Oh, Comet! Comet! And with a heart-breaking sob she fell upon her knees beside the horse. The radiator of the car had struck his forehead and stunned him, but the heavy lantern had torn that jagged wound in the perfect foreleg just below the shoulder, and from it his life blood was gushing with every heart-throb.

"But, Constance! Constance! my little girl, you must be hurt!" cried Hadyn, bending over her.

"I'm not! I'm not, I tell you," she cried, impatiently. "Go tie that horse and come here. We *must* save Comet!"

With the keenest anguish he had ever known Hadyn hurried the still restless horse to a sapling, tied him securely, and then returned to Constance, who was upon her knees striving to stanch the red stream flowing from the powerful leg. Puny effort! A moment before the splendid creature lying there upon the ground had been life, strength, vigor, beauty incarnate. Now—an inanimate mass.

"My little one, oh, my little one, come away! come away! This is no place for you," begged Hadyn, striving to draw her from the scene. She turned upon him like a fury, echoing indignantly:

"Come away! come away! What are you saying, Hadyn? With Comet dying? For he is. Quick! help me. We must stop this! I'm afraid an artery is severed. Make a tourniquet of your handkerchief or something. Oh, *do! do!*" she urged, frantically

"Oh, this is horrible! horrible! I would rather have him die a hundred deaths than have you pass through all this!" cried Hadyn, as he tied his handkerchief about the horse's leg and sought to twist it tight enough to stop the flow. It was useless. It needed a stouter bandage than that. The girl saw this, and the next instant had unbuckled the bridle rein, and was kneeling and binding it around the leg above that ragged wound. Then quickly slipping her riding-crop through the loop with Hadyn's assistance, she turned it tighter and

tighter, and presently had the joy of seeing that red flow lessen. "Oh, for help! Is *no* one within a hundred miles of us?" she moaned. "Hold this, Hadyn, and let me ride for someone," she cried.

"Constance! Never! Do you realize the state you are in?"—for the girl had given no thought to self in her excitement. One glance at her habit was enough.

"And do you think I would let you mount that mad brute? Had he not plunged aside, he, instead of Comet, would be lying before us this minute.

"Then you must go. Go at once, Hadyn. Ride to Pringle's for the ambulance and help."

"And leave you here alone on this mountain road with that horse, which may revive from this blow and struggle? Constance, are you mad?"

"No, I was never saner in all my life; but, unless you go, *I* shall. He won't struggle; he knows my voice, and he is already too weak from this—*this* awful thing to try to struggle,"

and she pointed shudderingly at the discolored earth. "Hadyn, dear, dear Hadyn, please, please go," she implored, turning up to him a pair of eyes swimming in tears. "I shall know what to do. Oh, please trust me! Please, do!"

For one moment the man looked at the woman dearer to him than all the world beside, then stooping over her he rested his lips first upon one eyelid then the other, and said very, very gently:

"God bless and guard you, my darling. I shall go as quickly as that beast can take me, and I shall never forget *this*. Comet, Comet, old man, we've fought some tough fights; but this is the toughest of all," and, bending over the horse, he ran his hand along the silky neck.

The faintest flutter of the nostrils acknowledged the caress, and the next second Hadyn had flung himself upon Lightfoot, and was riding down that mountain road at a pace which threatened destruction. Constance had never for a second lessened her firm hold

upon the riding-crop, but her eyes followed the rider, and her lips murmured:

"A moment ago I was a girl and did not realize. Now I know. Oh, Hadyn, Hadyn, come safely back to us!" and still holding that life-saving little riding-crop she laid her head down upon the beautiful neck and sobbed as though her heart would break.

Animals which are constantly with human beings learn to understand the tones which varying emotions govern, just as a human being learns to understand the wonderful language of the so-called dumb creatures. Comet had been Hadyn's closest companion for years, and during the past six months had been petted and cared for by all in Mrs. Carruth's home. But it was Constance whom he had grown to love best; Constance who rode him when Hadyn was at his office; and many a delightful hour's exercise had she taken on the splendid horse.

Very gradually Comet came back to the world of real things around him. The great eyes opened and the delicate nostrils quivered.

There was a slight effort to rise, but close to his ear murmured the voice he had learned to love and obey as an army horse obeys the voice of his master.

"Steady, Comet! Dear, dear Comet, keep quiet. There, old fellow! There! Steady! steady!"

The ears were turned to catch each tone; the eyes shone with a human intelligence; the nostrils breathed audibly, but the horse lay as quiet as though life had departed, and Constance did not move.

How long the minutes seemed! How far away from human aid that mountain road! How solemn, how silent the great woodland, stretching, stretching away in a vista of glorious colors! Overhead the soft October winds whispered and sighed in the tree-tops, and with each sigh a few brilliant leaves fluttered to the ground—dear Nature's coverlid for some baby growth to be nestled for its long winter's sleep. Far away the crows cawed and called to one another. Overhead, ominous shadow!

a hawk circled, and then, as though to dispel a sign so baleful, clear, sweet, exquisite as a voice from Paradise, came the liquid notes of a hermit thrush—a late lingerer whom his mates had left behind when they took flight to sunnier climes against the coming of bitter days.

The notes brought comfort to the girl. She had always loved them. No other bird-call meant so much to her as this, for it was associated with some of the sweetest and, yes, the saddest experiences of her life, and now it held a meaning it had never before held. All her life these notes would stand above all others. The experience was, indeed, bittersweet. She did not know how long she had lain there, for time seemed at a standstill, when along the ground she heard the rapid thud, thud of a horse's flying feet, and raising her head she saw Hadyn returning, Lightfoot in a lather and his flanks heaving. Hadyn flung himself from the horse, which was now too spent to do anything but stand and pant, and

hurried to Constance's side. Dropping upon his knees beside her, he drew her into his arms as she rose to her knees from her prone position, though she never for an instant relaxed her hold upon the crop. Comet nickered faintly, but for the first time in his life failed to hear his master's response to that greeting.

Like a weary little child Constance let her head fall upon the shoulder so near it, and whispered:

"Oh, Hadyn, the minutes have seemed so long to us!"

"My little girl! my little girl! Dear, dear heart!—so courageous, so brave, so strong! So perfect a woman in your tenderness combined with your strength. This hour has shown me what you are to me; what life would be without you. I thought I knew before, but I did not. And you, dear heart?"

There was no answer, but the softly perfumed hair nestled still closer against him. His arm tightened about her, and he said gently:

"I've waited four years for this moment, dear, but I never dreamed of such a setting for it. No words are necessary to tell me what I've won by waiting; but—the Ambulance is not far behind, and will be here in a few moments. My sign and seal, dear. May I claim it now? Then let me hold the crop and you go ever yonder."

Without a word the pure, beautiful face was raised to his, and in that moment Hadyn Stuyvesant felt that Paradise could not be far removed from such lips, for none could be purer or holier, and into his life at that instant came all that is best in manhood.

"Now go, my darling." Constance shook her head and smiled a gentle refusal.

"Please."

"No, dear; not until the Veterinary takes it from my hands. Yours are trembling, and it might loosen. There comes the Ambulance now. It will only be a moment longer."

When the panting horses which drew the

Ambulance came to a standstill the Veterinary sprang from it and hurried to the group.

"By George, Miss Carruth, have *you* done this?" he exclaimed. "Well, you can thank this young lady, Stuyvesant, for saving a valuable horse's life. Now, turn your patient over to me, Miss Carruth, and we will get him into the Ambulance and down the hill as fast as we can. There, that's right. Now, Stuyvesant, get her away from this place. A carriage is right behind us, and you must take her home. What an experience for a girl! Jo, you take charge of Lightfoot yonder."

Hadyn bent over to stroke his pet, and Constance knelt to press her lips to the great neck, then with Hadyn's aid struggled to her feet. She was cramped and stiff, but Hadyn's arm supported her, and more than one pair of eyes followed the girl admiringly as he led her to the carriage which just then drew up.

"Don't give a thought to this, Stuyvesant. We will do everything possible, and Miss Car-

ruth needs you more than Comet does now," the Veterinary called after them.

"I'll have her safely home in twenty minutes!" Hadyn called back.

Neither ever forgot that drive down the mountain. Until the strain was removed the girl did not realize how great it had been during the foregoing hour. Constance was thankful for the sheltering cover of that depot carriage and the strong arm encircling her. Her own strength seemed suddenly to have left her. Only Mrs. Carruth and Mammy were at home when they reached there. Hadyn half carried Constance to them.

"Bress Gawd! what done happen?" cried Mammy, almost taking the worn-out girl in her arms. "Has you done fell off Comet?"

"Hadyn, what is it?" cried Mrs. Carruth.

"She is not harmed, but is nervously exhausted. Will you believe me, and let Mammy put her to bed for a few hours? Go, rest, my darling," he said, taking Constance's face in his hands and pressing his lips to her's.

"Glory be ter Gawd! Come wid me, baby. D'ere's nothin' wrong wid you, I knows. Ef you's done had a fright, *he* gwine be de bes' medicine bimeby. Go 'long wid yo' boy, Miss Jinny—yo's got one now—an' leave dis hyar chile ter me."

"Constance, darling, tell me first that you are not injured," said Mrs. Carruth, tenderly taking the girl in her arms.

Constance nestled against her and whispered softly:

"Not hurt a particle, Mother, only a little shaky, and, oh, *so* happy! Let Mammy help me while Hadyn tells you," and smiling through her tears the girl was led upstairs by Mammy's ever ready, loving arms.

Mrs. Carruth's eyes followed her a moment, then turned to encounter Hadyn's looking at her with a tenderness she never forgot as he extended his arms and said:

"My little mother! My little mother! Will you let these serve and hold you henceforth? May I be, as dear old Mammy says, 'your boy?'

You do not know how I have longed to be that in reality all these years that I have been waiting. Come!"

"In the beautiful days of long ago,"
When all this world was so new and fair,
An Angel came from the world above
To bestow the gift of all gifts most rare.
And what was this blessing?—this priceless boon,
To bring to mortals the greatest good?
Ah! need I whisper that name so dear—
God's precious gift of Motherhood?

Perhaps but once in her life can a woman know a more precious moment than that in which she gives her daughter into the love and keeping of the man she has learned to love, and this mother realizes that he is now her son. The sense of rest, peace, protection that came to Mrs. Carruth when this strong man held her in his arms, and called her by that tenderest of all names, "Mother," passes all

power to describe. From that instant he *was* "her boy," for the man ever remains "the boy" in the mother's love, and Hadyn had rich store of Mrs. Carruth's.

Leading her to a settee, with arm still circling her, he told her the whole story. When it was ended he asked gently:

"And can the heart find room for another son, little Mother?"

Taking the fine, strong face in her hands, she kissed him very tenderly, saying:

"I think you have always been that to me, dear. Yes, from the first hour I knew you. I am very, very happy in my newest son, and can trust my little girl to his care with all faith and confidence."

"God bless you!" whispered Hadyn.

"Who is here?" cried Jean at the door of the library, and running in came to a sudden standstill. Neither her mother nor Hadyn spoke, and for a moment Jean stood motionless in the middle of the room, her eyes turned first upon one face then upon the other, her expressive

face changing as her emotions changed. Then impulsively as she did everything, she ran toward them and, dropping upon her knees beside Hadyn, clasped her arms around his neck, and, nestling her cheek against his, cried:

"Now I *know* you are all mine, and everyone may know how hard I love you, for any girl may love a brother all she wants to."

That was a wonderfully sweet moment for Hadyn.

Does much more remain to be told?

Yes, but that is another story.

THE END.